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PlayStation 2 vs. Dreamcast

is the next console war already over? The full report, page 70

Dino Crisis

RESIDENT EVIL

Capcom's horror-masters deliver the most frightening game of the year. EXCLUSIVE hands-on report — plus, the scoop on the next TWO Resident Evil games

PLUS!

PlayStation

• Um Jammer Lammy • Xena: Warrior Princess • Wipeout 3

• NFL Football • Dead or Alive 2 • Slave Zero • Blue Stinger

NPL Pootball • Dead of Alive 2 • Slave Zero • Blue Stillger

• Starsiege • Requiem • Heroes of Might and Magic III

Nintendo 64

• Hybrid Heaven • Army Men • Smash Brothers

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We years ago, PlayStation redefined videogame chic. Today, the aging handware serves to demonstrate two things. First, elegantly designed hardware can age gracefully, even in an industry that makes a hobby out of outpacing Monor's law. Socious, even outdate thandware tike PlayStation Monor's law. Socious, even outdate thandware tike PlayStation Monor's law. Socious, even outdated handware tike PlayStation to the play of th

it is, however, perhaps appropriate that what may be the best PalyStation game this year featured inflocusurs as its main characters. While Sony says that it will continue to support the system "for the foreseable feature, "the writing is clearly on the wall for PayStation. Segs has Dreamest, a brace of thise for Its U.S. Laisuch, and a battle plax. And yet, the simple announcement of PlayStation 2 may have put just as many nails in PayStations or the play of the

Can PlayStation 2 advance Sony's dominance, or will Dreamcast prove that Sega still has what it takes? Our in-depth analysis of the strengths — and the weaknesses — of both systems starts on page 70.







Knights. Castles.

Joan of Arc.

Oh my.

www.micresoft.com/games/age2





Microsoft

JUNE 1999

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DINO CRISIS

The creator of Resident EW, Shinji Mikami, is currently working on not one, not two, but three new titles. The best of the bunch? Dino Crisis. Exchanging the slow dread of the Resident Ewil series for a more action-oriented, white-knuckle intensity, Dino Crisis seeks to re-ment the samine serve its zomble-filled cousin becan. So what's it like issering so many projects at once? Find our from Micera himself, in our exclusive interview starting on page 42



PLAYSTATION 2 VS. DREAMCAST The battle for the next generation of home consoles has already begun, but the real question is, is it already over?



DREAM TEAM

With the U.S. launch of Dreamcast almost here, there are a million questions about what's going to happen, and Sega's Chris Gilbert, Peter Moore, and Bernie Stolar patiently answer them all







INTELLIGENCE Report from the floor of the Tokyo Game Show • Wry commentary on the Game Deve ce • Pssti Hey buddy, wanna license a game engine? • A bevy of new handhelds





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ALPHAS: 29 games previewed The fastest, hottest, and smartest games (and developers) from all corners of the globe. If you don't hear about it here, it's probably not worth torowing about



That's 13 "regular" reviews, plus the triumphant return of the Gamer's Guide. You wanted it back, so here it is. Now, put the rocks away and sit down — there will be no storing today, thank you

ANALYZING

Intelligence Gaming news from where

DREAMCAS

Dreamcast news Our largest (and with the system nearing release, next to last) Dreamcast section ever

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PlayStation 2 vs. Dreamcast

How well can Sega fare against the Sony juggernaut? Next Generation's in-depth report

TALKING

State of the Dream With the launch of Dreamcast, Sega has both a tremendous opportunity and the weight of its own history. So what's the plan?

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INTELLIGENCE

Game industry news and analysis

SPECIAL REPORT TOKYO GAME SHOW SPRING '99

The etege was set for a bettle between the two Japanese hardware giants — but one of them didn't care



Sega went all out at the show, bu didn't have as much on the floor as expected in light of Sony's recent PSX 2 announcement

wice a year in Japan, the Tokyo Game Show (TGS) is the videogame event to look forward to. The first day of the show is industry only (although we saw fans scalping tickets outside the hall for anybody willing to pay the ¥2000 price - roughly \$20), but unlike E3, the last two days are open to the public. As can be expected, more than 150,000 fans show up to see what's hot, to play the newest games, and to pick up some of the popular videogame merchandise that companies sell in the designated marketplace area.

Sega's big push

The booth of the show belonged to Sega. This was the company's last chance to show off the Dreamcast with absolutely no competition around in the coming system war, and it made the most of what it had. Upon entering the hall, gamers were treated to an absolutely immense video screen showing off the latest in Dreamcast games and commercials (many of which are brilliant) as well as presentations from many DC developers who wanted to talk about their latest wares. One of the first speakers at this forum was Yu Suzuki who actually brought the only bad news of the show. Shenmue won't be ready for its August release date. As a result, Suzuki and team are breaking the game into two different parts that will be sold separately for ¥2800 (roughly \$25). Part one is scheduled to come out in August; part two will come out

shortly before the holidays. It looks as if the game could be worth the wait, judging from the five playable demos available in kiosks around the booth. While the full impact of the gameplay was hard to grasp from the pieces that we played, the game is artistically far ahead of anything else that is currently being shown for the system. If the final gameplay can match the astounding visuals, it looks as though Dreamcast will have its first ann that domanetrates that the system's 3D power isn't so paitry when compared with the upcoming PlayStation 2. Other impressive titles at the Sega booth included Namco's breathtaking conversion of Soul Calibur, the surprisingly good Let's Make Pro Soccer Club, and Konami's Airforce Delta. Not so hot were Maken X and King Of Fighters Dream Match '99 (although there was a sign saving that it was only 40% done, so there

is some hope). Overall, the feet of Sega's booth was optimistic, even though there weren't as many titles as expected.

only weeks before the show Sony

Sony holds back Even though the high-profile announcement of PlayStation 2 was

stood by its current system. A sizn on the show floor announced that nothing would be shown on the next PlayStation, so gamers had to be content with what was on the floor What was on the floor however, wasn't anything very new or exciting. The biggest game in the booth was the recently released Lim Jammor Lammy Isoo raviow page 90), which was playable on a huse row of demo systems. To accompany the game. Sony also had an elaborate concert stage show with PaRappa and Lammy along with various booth girls. Sony also showed off the Japaneselocalized version of Spyro, which

The final game in Sorn's booth was Polyhory Digital's new shooter called Omega Boost. After waiting in a short line, eager gamers were actually led into a special room with the earth of the systems of the game to pile, it's a fairly straightforward shooter with great gaphics, but hardly any sort of big gan to use to combat Segs. in fact, Sorny really seemed to have ignored Segs's looming presence at the show and continuo on as if it was just another show. Is the company

really that confident?

seemed to be well received.

Third parties

The booths of the third-party software publishers in Japan dominated most of the show floor. While almost all of them had PlayStation games to show quite a few showcased new Dreamcast titles. Some of the biggest games of the show came from the third parties this year, and there were some greats for both PlayStation and Dreamcast.

The big games on the show floor for Dreamcast were mostly shown in video form. Capcom showed off a much longer movie than had ever previously been shown of its upcoming entry in the Biohazard series (Resident Evil in the U.S.), Biohazard: Code Veronica. The footage that was shown was impressive, but there was obviously still some work to be done. Tecmo quietly --- and not so quietly --wowed the audience with Dead or Alive 2, also seen only on video. Even though the game is currently being shown only as a Naomi arcade game, it's no secret that it will be coming home, probably sooner rather than later due to the close relationship between the Naomi and Dreamcast boards. The video of AOA 2 was spectacular and showed a level of visual excellence that has never been seen before in a fighting game (eclipsing even Sega's own Virtua Fighter 3). There was little doubt in anybody's mind that if this game had been playable, it would have stolen the show.

What did end up monopolizing attendees' time on the show floor was Namco's excellent Soul Calibur, which was playable both at Namco's booth and at Sega's. The level of detail shown in both the fighters and environments is far ahead of that in the arcade



STOP THE PRESS As **Next Generation** was coing

to print, we learned that two too Scor executives. Brutchen Echinger, VP of third party rulations, and Eric Hammond, VD of product dealerment finturviewed in NG 481 had left the company. Look for further details and analysis in our July issue



A lot of the show floor is taken up by games to play, but many boo had space allocated for their alaborate sons and dance stage show

version, and the game plays very well. This title is due out this summer and it looks to be Sega's next big killer app.

Desoite Dreamcast's quality. however, PlayStation dominated the quantity front and was still the most prevalent system on the show floor Still those were quite a few high-quality games on display. One of the big standouts was, of course,

Capcom's Dino Crisis, which was shown on the same video as Code Veronica. Square Soft had its share of nonular titles, with playable versions of Racing Lagoon, Front

Mission 3 (a Mech strategy game series that has never come to the States), Saga Frontier 2, and The Legend Of Maria. The Legend of Mana was the most popular of the games since it was the first time anybody had seen it, and it looked fantastic (although some may complain about the fact that it is entirely sprite based.) Enix had a hit on its hands with Bust A Move 2 running in its booth, but the game seemed to be a lot like the original (a good thing?). Dragon Ouest VII was shown on video once again with the promise that it will be out late this year. As usual at the show, there were also a lot of games that. for one reason or another, will never come out anywhere but

> Go, garnered a lot of interest from the Japanese crowds, Many

developers also had a Resident Evil

rip-off of some sort, usually with a at its booth, too. Japan. Two of these, Tecmo's horseracing sim Gallop Racer 3 and Taito's train-driving sim Tensha De

WHO IS IT?

sci-fi spin. Elsewhere on the show floor. Bandai and SNK battled it out to

see which of their handhelds will be #2 in the Japanese market (Game Boy is a very strong #1). Bandai seemed to have the edge with Wonderswan, but Neo Geo Pocket Color had some fun games

TGS is usually a preview of what U.S. garners can expect come E3 and the fall season. The verdict? Lots of Dreamcast, even more PlayStation, and a few healthy surprises.



s lined up at both Sega's and N to play the spectacular conversion of Soul Calibur on Dre

Www.kgm

POCKET MONSTERS

Upstarts challenge Nintendo for the portable gaming market

ame Boy and Game Boy Color (GBC) are monsters in the world of portable gaming. More powerful systems such as Game Gear and Lynx have come and gone, yet Nintendo's tiny juggemant has remained the company's top-selfing system for over ten years, growing even more popular with the release of Game Boy Color It's templing for others to eve this market that Nintendo has to itself and want a piece. Exploiting price-point angles, hig-name games, and technological advantages, two companies - SNK and Tiger - are hoping to wrest

in 1999

SNK brings on color Nen Gen Pocket Color has been out

in tagan for a few months now and is enjoying moderate success in April, the company started selling the system in the U.S. via its web site (www.snkusa.com) for \$79.99. While a spokesperson for SNK has told Next Generation that retail channels aren't out of the question in the future, she did say that the online venue was the only place the system will be available for now. NGPC is quite small, but it boasts a larger screen than GBC with only a minimal increase in overall space footprint. The screen is made of the same highly reflective material as GRC but also features a higher resolution as well as the ability to simultaneously display more colors (although we have yet to see a game that does so), and in theory, with its 16-bit processor it can make more complex games as well. There are also some added functions included in the system like an alarm

clock, a calendar, and a horoscope. There are currently 10 titles for the system, including some quality. adaptations of popular SNK arcade hits like King Of Fighters R2, Samurai Showdown, and Bust A Move. Also available are sports games (baseball, tennis, and soccer) and

two casino games. When we asked SNK about future games from third parties, we were told there are "things happening" but these would be announced at a later date. Our prognosis, then, is mixed. The system itself looks great, handles well, and comes at a competitive price, but with online distribution only it's hard to predict a bright commercial future for the system in the U.S. Games are another big question, and it remains to be seen what SNK has in the pipe as far as new releases. With some good thirdparty backing and the traditionally slices of marketshare from Nintendo solid SNK first-party output, this system could be a cult success but we doubt Howard Lincoln will lose much sleep over it.

> Game.com.pocket.pro Tiger Electronics has pushed its Game.com.pocket.pro in the portables market for quite some time without much success. This year, though, Tiger will re-launch the system: taking a page from Apple's book, the system will come in five fruity colors and will retail for a super-competitive \$29.95. Other

than that, though, it's the same system as before, complete with a backlit black-and-white touchscreen and calendar and address book. Tiger is betting that where the

system will get some attention is in its 1999 games lineup, which reads like a Who's Who of the top console games. In the coming year, we can look forward to portable versions of Metal Gear Solid, Castlevania. Command & Conquer Red Alert Madden Football, NASCAR, and NRA rive. Other titles include classics like Frozzer, Centipede, Scrabble, and Monopoly. While we have our doubts that the game quality on some of these titles can live up to the legacy of their 32-bit counterparts (and, truth be told. conversions like Sonic The Hedgehog, Duke Nukem, and Mortal Kombat have been disappointing to put it mildly, the screenshots look good, and Tiger promises that the quality of the gameplay will be better With easily recognizable games and a price \$20 lower than its closest competitor, Tiger may well find its niche in the portables market.



IT IS...







Sharp commutary 8-bit CPU 200:180 LCD resolution 4 gray levels for 3 with 1 transparence) with backlight 13r10 taudiscress membrane Provietany 9 oin senal

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Exterior: 2 AA

ARCADIA

ENGINES OLD AND NEW

ls building your own game engine just re-inventing the wheel?

ver the last few years, game developers have increasingly taken to licensing an existing game engine rather than building their own from the ground up. This has some obvious advantages. "The benefit in using existing technology is that you can usually finish the game much more quickly," says lack Mamais, currently the director of Heavy Gear II. "The engine you buy has probably already had months or years of testing in the marketplace. This means you have an opportunity to put out a very stable product, but you're fied to the original design."

Buying an engine also typically gives a developer access to whatever development tools are needed as well - another major time saver. Despite the possible savings of money and time. however, there are some drawbacks. Eric Biessman, project. lead for Soldier of Fortune at Raven Software, explains, "Sure, you can just jump into the technology and start cranking out a game, but if you add no modifications, you run the risk of looking like a 'me too' product. In order to make a different game that will ride on its own laurels, you really need to modify the technology guite heavily. a process that sometimes seems to take as long as writing an entirely new engine."

The trend started, of course, with the runaway success of the Quake licensing program, and firstperson shooters remain the mainstay of licensing deals. Today. the announcement of what engine an up-and-coming title may use is almost as important as who the hero is - that's one advantage of using an existing engine, and one of its pitfalls. Licensing an engine has

become as much a marketing or PR decision as a technological one."





Velve's Helf-Life began with the Queke II engine — which was modified so heavily, the geme still took a year and e

admits Rob Huebner, vice president of Nihitistic, "If you license a popular engine, you get a sort of built-in audience and built-in expectations of what the title will deliver if I announce an Unreal engine license. the Unreal fan sites will immediately cover my same title and start a buzz about it. But how far could I diverge from the Unreal formula before I alienate those fans?" DreamWorks Interactive's Lyle

Hall sums it up this way. "It often happens that the team will want to heavily customize or modify the existing engine in order to achieve the best implementation of the game design or to too the competition's technology, which can wipe out any of the benefits of licensing. Creating your own engine means you own it, but it also means you're stuck with it, for good or bad. Ultimately you have to believe it is going to cost you less to license an engine than it is to build your own."

BATTLE IN ARKANSAS

The state legislature adjourned a

NEW BOAROS FROM NY AND NAM

will share some technology with

equivalent" for the PSX 2 and

NAMED TO THE

HARDCORE

around 1986 with the NES and snowballed from there. It got so bad that my wife had to pick up one of my into little pieces to get my attention Finely, in October 1994, efter nine years of memaga, I was given an ultimatum. The choice was clear: she got the house and the kids, and I got the 25-inch TV, NES, Super NES, Geneers CD, 300, and my sanity. now share a one-room ecertment with my PlayStation, Saturn, NS4 SNES, NES, Geme Boy, PC - end I am expecting (Dreamcast), I don't know whether the next statement is hiss, or just plan onthetic, but,

I've never been happier. Ray "Tekezo" Taylor Have a hardcore story you ware to share? Send it to herdcore@next-generation.com

IN THE STIININ

Gauntlet Legends isn't the only Atari Games coin-op title heading home, as War: Final Assault is also heading to Nintendo 64. How well will this arcade first-person shooter translate to the N64? Likely pretty damn good, since one of the industry's legendary coders, Ed Logg (creator of Asteroids, Gauntlet, and Contineds) is directly responsible for the port. Logg was also responsible for the fantastic N64 version of San Francisco Rush. And on the subject of Rush, the true arcade sequel, San Francisco Rush: 2049 had just gone on test at the time of this writing. The secure will feature all-new tracks based in a futuristic San Francisco, and all-new cars to



choose from. Early test drivers

report the game is running

Where do you go after working for Bill Gates? Well, if you're Brian Fleming, you go into game development Fleming a one-time technical assistant to Gates himself. has launched his own game development company, Sucker

Punch Productions, This Seattlebased group is at work on a character-based platform game for N64 tentatively titled Sprocket. Sprocker's fully-3D world sports a unique realtime physics engine with hundreds of interactive objects. Fleming explains the physics engine has enabled the group to create some unique gameolay elements. including a tractor beam players can use to move objects or swing Pitfallstyle through levels. "There's also new vehicles on every level," Fleming says, suggesting another feature of the physics engine. And the team has set its sights high with what Fleming describes as "topnotch visuals in the Rare/Nintendo mold." Sucker Punch's 13-person team has been working on the title for nearly 18 months and has just begun the search for a publisher. Considering how well Valve (another group of ex-Microsoft employees) did with Hulf-Life, it will be interesting to see if Sucker Punch



can similarly shake up the N64

on shelves by the holidays.

market. The plan is to have Sprocket

If you've been asking

when DreamWorks Interactive was going to make a Saving Private Rvan game, stop asking - it is. Although it's not actually based on the film.



shooter for PlayStation set during WWI. The game will combine the tactical complexity of GoldenEye with the mowing-down-Nazis appeal of Castle Wolfenstein. DreamWorks has even tapped the assistance of Dale Dye, the military consultant responsible for the authenticity of films like Saving Private Rvan and Platoon (he puts pampered actors through a crash bootcamp). Dve assisted in mission layouts and character development. Medal of Honor puts players in the role of an intelligence agent, and this 30-level game with 15 authentic WWII weapons should be available this fall. Will it be same of the year? Possible, although there's a rumor of strong contention from Miramax Interactive's Shakespeare-based game. We'll keep you posted.

NEWS BYTES Complete by Auron Anto-Local of News Description Office The Seay expire is drive its part to make

publisher Titus (Superman) has invested then 30% of interplay, ending months of

industry analyst told us, "Interplay never should have gone public, and now they're right, with Interplay's stock well below \$5 a share. Mattel, eager for iak, if not sales, has acquired the remains of defunct girl-games publisher Purple Moon, a media darling without the sales to metch. Perhaps pairing Rockett with

power; indeed. The strategy emerg realties-strategy giants seems to be to delay: Cavadog has pushed back Total 1998, to June Westwood Studios

responded with a delay of Command and

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE

By Frenk O'Connor, executive editor, Games Business



The newly renemed GDC is getting bigger, noisier, and increosi focused on industry issues end, of course, money. Ah. we fond remember the deys when it was about game development...

rankly, the first couple of GDCs, back when they were CDGCs (for Computer Game Developers Conferences), were a geek utopia. Like-minded haines descended on the small Santa Clara convention center with issues like Gouraud shading, sorte scaling, and adventure-game text parsing on their agendas. Apparently now they're all gone, shunted into dusty back rooms. This year's shirty new GDC (the first C was dropped so console developers wouldn't feel left out) was very different, with as many suits as leans, more leather than flannel, and haircuts you could

set your watch by The upscale San Jose convention center became a cross between a recruitment fair and a software cono. Sure, there were still plenty of

esoteric conferences, on subjects as diverse as 3D technology and, um. 3D techniques, but the overriding theme was money A strip of booths, loosely termed Job Alley, was a minefield for wary programmers as slick little men in golf shirts darted forward to offer poentives of milk honey and Linuxbased PlayStation 2 development.

On the other side of the hall. flashy, well-staffed, slightly bloated booths served up the latest 3D software packages from companies like Alas and Nichimen, a far cry from the "good old days" in Santa Clara where the show floor was a forgotten afterthought. Make no mistake: the latest GDC heralds the beginning of the

real trend toward a Hollywood business model. This year might be the last time we see relatively accessible characters like Al Lowe. Sid Meler, and Alex Garden wandering the floor. Next year, we'll get to meet their agents - if they return our cells Software and hardware

companies threw up E3-style booths with lots of monitors showing games we've seen before. It's amusing to watch the eyes of a first-person shooter designer tear

as assembled developers watched Sony Vice President Phil Hamson extal the miraculous virtues of PlayStation 2. Dreamcast technology seemed like an illremembered imagining in the stark light of NURBs, DVD, and 60 million polygons per second.

The increasing similarity of consoles to PCs is making life a lot easier for the game development community, nawhere more visibly demonstrated than at Sega's Dream Big booth, Microsoft Windows CE salesmen tried to convince C++ mayens that it would take about two weeks to port a PC game to the Sega console. Turns out it's almost true Whether that will be good for the Dreamcast market remains to be seen -- especially given that Sega seems just as keen to ensure

At the recent GDC, the upscale San Jose convention center became a cross between a recruitment fair and a software expo

up as he spots a better one on a rival stand. An equally fun sport is watching shameless producers making notes and sketches under those same orcumstances.

Sony - although it had no stand, booth, or visible presence effectively stole the show. Sega's "Dream Big" campaign seemed ironically appropriate nomenclature

But the geek culture wasn't lost entirely. There was an impressive display of garagedeveloped titles, and Apple lured the biggest gaggle of phreaks, hackers, and coders at the show by running a QuickTime-enhanced Episode / trailer on every Mac at the

original development.

Think Different booth.

constration PlayStation accuses the

the world. Sean COO Bernst Stoler even is, of course, Microsoft, Man of the EDS

Puts on the lack all around to the boys as Singulanty Software. And when we s vs. we're not far off. These high-school annual Independent Gemes Festival at

For daily game news, go to www.eest-generaline.com



DREAMCAST COUNTDOWN

Next Generation tracks the progress of Sega's dream machine

Dead or Alive 2



The Tecro's organi Dood or alter was invasised in 1998 as the first their county the using 68gts Model 2 arcade board, it surprised many layers who becaused such subprised from playing since board of such capturing fighting game could only come from Segit. Captorn, or Namoo. Altrough the title browned many gameslay and design elements from Segit Virtue Righter 2, at and the involves use of "Grappy zones" which lay in the permetter of the ring and custed massive durings gland impresses explosers to dighters.



DOA 2 improves on the original in many ways yet still retains its risque attitudes



Surprisingly, Tecmo seems to be giving Sega a run for most-impressive Naomi game

unfortunate enough to stumble into them
Once again, Tecmo is surpassing all expectations
with the sequel, which is powered by Sega's

with the sequel, which is powered by Sega's Dreamost-Need a grade board, Naomi. "We felt that Naomi is a very 'Staggifforward' machine,' says Producer Tomonobou Itagale." As a game designer's talent is directly reflected by what they write to the game screen, it has been a challenge to meet the contental of the Naomi hardware.

The challenge seems to have paid off, to the point that many believed, after seeing the game at this year's AOU expo in Tokyo, that the game will use two Naomi boards at once, "We are using only one standard board." Itagaki confirms so he does not predict any technical problems with porting the game to Dreamcast, What's more, says Itasaki, "As with the first game, there also is a strong possibility for DOA 2 to appear on a Sony console. My team could cope with it instantly if conversion work for PlayStation 2 is required "While much of the gameplay looks similar to the original, there are new battle modes as well as some breathtaking graphics. Even though the game is only 30% complete, Next Generation took some time to talk with Itazaki about the future of his game and that of the fighting-game genre.

An audience with Tomonubu Itagak



to release a second version of Deod or Alive?
Tomonolou (cagaia: I wonder why... [Laughs] in

Why did it take so much time

1996, we released Deod or Allive. Eleven months after that, we released the Segs Saturn version; then five months after that, the PlayStation one. Approximately six months after that, we released a System 1-based arcade version. In February, we just showed Deod or Alive 2, As you can see, we have a multi-olation

strategy, and we have kept very busy.

When did you start to develop Deod or Alive 2? Is the same team on the project? We started the project a long time ago, but we only started to implement it last September. It's the same team,

Presently, are you only working on the

Naomi version? Vec.

Mat was the initial concept behind Dead or Alive? 1 I wanted to come back to a more primitive concept and a good-looking one. Our basic concept was "sex and violence." [Laughs] If you play the game, you will feel a mental pressure that can be associated to the physical pressure of characters. Visually, we included some sexy

1562 What are the main differences between the It is difficult to answer. In fact, apart from the

"essence," everything is different.

His But did you keep the same fighting system of "danger zones"? Fig. Yes, but we improved it. We implemented different other systems related to the "danger zones." In fact, we wanted to make the game look more real, so we increased the ground effects, and we also introduced some new character gimmicks during the explosions.

The demo shows a team battle mode... Yes. In the screenshots, you can see four gauge bars. But we also include a regular versus mode.

11/60 Does the game still control in the same way as

Yes, I want to keep a three-button system for Deod or Alive 2. A good playability is very important. The buttons control system will be similar to Deod or Alive; attacks will be 70% similar. The way characters move in 3D will be different. Characters will always face each other.

Did you think about including an escape button like in Virtuo Fighter 3?

No. We will stick to a three-button control. Personally, I do not like the name "escape." A fighting game has to be an offensive type of game. Virtuo Fighter 3 is a "defense" type of game and players will alternate defense and attack position, defense, defense, and defense again... Deod or Alive 2 is an offense, offense, offense, type of game!

What difficulties have there been with designing the realistic motions in the game? Some characters' animations are designed manually

and some others have been designed with motion capture and adjusted manually. Some facial expressions required some manual designing, too. For certain sexy animations,

we used a real female staff member to make some real moves. It was pretty expensive, though! [Laughs] MC Are there more programmers or designers on

the staff? TI Designers. There are fewer than so programmers; all the other staff members are designers. The present team worked on both the PlayStation and Saturn versions of Deod or Alive. In fact, it was a parallel development, and the current team was split into two teams.

NG How different is it to develop on Naomi than Model 2?

It's much easier to keep looking at the game in progress. For the Model 2, we were using flash memory as media. To test the game, you have to open the system, plug it in, and do what you have to do. This process used to take one day to do and now only takes two to three hours on Naomi. Now, quality checking has become much easier. Before, we could only check our game seven times a week, but with Naomi, we check around 20 times. The game

NG How much do you cooperate with Sega? Sega is not involved at all in the game development, but they help with tools such as the Naomi debug drivers.

quality becomes higher overall, as a result,











The animation in the game looks far more detailed and realistic than even VF3. Characters look like they are really fighting each other rather than simply executing moves



iti-tiered levels add a whole new dimension to the fighting. Knock a character off the cliff — then jump down to finish him off

How many characters did you include in the game? I cannot give you a precise figure. But in the end, Dead or Alive 2 will include more characters than a regular 3D fighting game used to have. I can say that building the new character skills has definitely been the hardest part.

What games have you worked on before DOA? As a leader, Deod or Alive was my first game. Before, I worked on a game that was never released. (Laughs) Before that, I was graphics programmer for a Super Famicom game based on a Japanese animation movie named Coptoin Tsuboso.

Fighting games have become much more rare lately - there were almost none on the show floor at AOU. Does this make you worry at all about the state of the fighting-game market?

I believe that fighting games were becoming too numerous and people were fed up with the genre. I am very confident about our game, however.

What do you think of weapon fighting games? It is a difficult genre; the games in it are not ming hit titles. For a weapon fighting game, I would prefer to use an analog control, as it provides a better feeling when hitting. Digital buttons and the joystick are inconvenient for weapon fighting games.

Where is the fighting genre headed? TI. I believe that we will come back to the origin, to linear fighting games. Soon, fighting games will come back to more simple and powerful directions.

NG What are your favorite games? I like the ones I make. In the past, I really liked Street Fighter II, but my favorite game is Zeido. I also like Wizordry, and also Civilization on PC. I was so impressed with Zeldo that I included a waterfall stage in Dead or Alive 2. For the scene when characters are falling, I also studied very precisely the Zeldo waterfalls-falling scene.

NG What are the rival titles to Deod or Alive? My first rival is time. I have to fight against time. Of course, there are other fighting games from other companies, like Tekken, Virtuo Fighter, and Ehrgeiz, I studied all of them carefully in order to determine the good and bad points of each game.

NG Yu Suzuki and AM2 have been working on Shenmue for three years now instead of Virtuo Fighter, and surprisingly, it's not an arcade game. Can we expect you to make a console-only game in the near future as well - possibly not even related to the fighting genre? The We are not only interested in fighting games. Please look out for what we'll do in a year!



The team battle mode, a first for 3D fighters, adds some variety to the standard one-on-one gameplay





Visual Concepts

Oreamcast launch

The first gives shown for provincent healty a spirit ago, 22 met mann from its way interest present of Japanese gamers via a playable demo, Broken into several segments, the dec includes an interesting Co moves as

and materiorium rating stages, the leases providing the leases providing the leases providing the leases of the lease of





rp's D2 demo features be ion and racing segments ler to give players an ide stifle's diverse gamentay



A powerful control tool lets designers tweak the controls and responsiveness for different positions; don't expect your linemen to be as agile as your backs

with the the Outstand Burders may not mean must be me legation of games in talky or control, lew wards contest that Medicities Football and at must be with the Use of the West Burder Football and at must be own the Use Success of Greenes as South and if you don't that sign has blasmed from the lack of your don't thank sign has blasmed from the lack of your don't thank sign has blasmed the way south of the West Burder Burder South from the Lock of the West Burder South from th

When Visual Concepts finishes Sega Sports NFL Pootball (tentative title), the game will have been in development for two years, representing Sega of America's largest-ever first-party development effort. The size of the effort is directly in fine with the importance Sega places on the title internally, it is viewed as a loss-leading title that must succeed if Developments is to achieve early domanace in the U.S.

To ensure that success, Visual Concepts has designed a game that is far more than just the next step in sports games From the huge amounts of



motion-capture data to the play-making features to the AL, MFL Football is being designed with one goal; to make a revolutionary, quantum leap past the state of the art football games on PlayStanon and Nintendro 64. Today, several months from completion, the game is coming together with all the enhancements promised back in 1997—stating with a framerate that is a molk solid offoris.

"Story fars at the way you played all of the old football games," says Thomas, referring to the classic titles of the 16 bit et al. "It gives you the most feedback on your pippad, and if et us display more farmes of animation." Until recently, the only way to play a west-animated 3D football game at 60 fps was to vertice to the arcade and drop quarters into a Bitt." 99 machine. "We're not making Bitt," Thomas says. "This is truty a football signation game."



tion, so weather can actually change in the course of game. If it rains, the field

Still. Thomas is quick to point out that "we've got some good hard hits." He's not kidding Six of the 16 motion-capture days (using more than 14 athletes and actors) were devoted to the stuntmen, who took some devastating hits "Other football games on the market currently hay: about 250 animations," says Thomas. explaining why his team used more than twice as many mo-cap days as most projects "This game is going to have 1,500 animations, at least - possibly as fmanyl as 1,700, depending upon RAM "

The game will be the first to feature motioncaptured two-on-one tackles - 80 different versions were shot, and at least half should make it into the game. Different-sized athletes were also used to assure the right kind of movement for the right positions. "We actually motion-capture different positions," Thomas explains, "because a quarterback runs differently than a lineman, and you'll see that in

the game, for all the motions. There are different motion models, and there is actually different geometry to support the motion models," According to Thomas, Dreamcast gives the

developer plenty of animation storage space, and VC's engineers have also compressed the animation data to get even more in On-screen players are segmented to support separate upper- and lower body animations, and a unique timing-based blending method makes it all seamless "It's all in seconds kind of like film," Thomas says, "in the sense that 'this is a 2.6-second walk animation," And, of course, with the blending and everything else and running at 60

frames, you don't see any hiccup or jerking " Still, all this motion capture and seamless animation would be wasted without a true 3D collision-detection system - which is exactly what VC has created. Most current sports titles operate



ore little diagrams, as visual Concept's playbook draws the play right on the field for players to see. Of se, VC will also enable players to secretly call plays via Virtual Memory Units





NBA 2000 Sestides its NPI, game, Visual Concepts is also hard at store, on a hardouse besterhall game, With a hasts not adjusted many motion aptured move than any other basks theil yame,



xpect the animation and etail in this game to eclips Il other NBA games so far

with cylinder-based collision (picture an individual tube rising around every on-screen character). The Visual Concepts model has 18 different spheres, which encompass the characters' individual.

body parts.

"In other sports games," Thormas says, "il you just hit someone, and you just hit them in the leg, they'il in do a trocker aimstoin, and it will be a generic tockle animation. In ours, we know where you're hit, and we play the night reaction! it works tackles look more realattic than those of any previous football bitle Next. Generation has seen.

Extended animation soft limited to bookers built-handing animation are accurate to the point of birillance. During an in-game demo, Thomas runs a page play in which the recontress franch act dysward to line up perfectly with an infound spraft. Then, a immensite terceptor, a defereive back leags forward and swest the pass way with all the grace and timing of the NRTs best. The moment is a besuntial strenger of the NRTs best. The moment is a besuntial strenger of the NRTs by this sumpely promises.

Of course, the player models themselves have to look good, too The team can

themselves have to look good, too. I he team can scale individual bones in the player model, resulting in a resistor range of physical attributes. Every lineman, will no longer measure exactly 6721 and weigh 300 pounds. "We can actually scale muscle," Thomas says, "so you can see that linemen have by arms, and some of the other gays have smalled arms."

A wide range of equipment and features have been specially modeled, from helmet to shoes, including 30 different facemask types, ten different sists tones, special pad placement, and even breatheringht strips across some players incose. And Thomas even internates that most of the players' faces will be modeled under the helmest. "We are even group to do player-specific timing," Thomas beasts, "like Dan Marno's boots. Manno his to have a special boot because he hunt his foot."

Assic from these graphics enhancements, NEL will tap into Presineats's 4.5 alone channels. Most significant will be the camera based audio, which will maximize the 30 acuted enhorments. If the camera is two on the playing field, the player will have more of the on-field stouds, such as this guits, and on-field chatter. As the camera rises of the field, it will pick up more cread notice and general staticum sound. The cread should also sound much more resistable because the audio is layered. If everything





Despite all these graphics and audio advantages and audio advancements, the real secret weapon behind AFE. Arbitration will be Visual Concepts powerful AV poly exident 900, which enables the despiteres and producers to adjust the AI and playbook behinoor thereinly with the prices of a button." The looked at a to of other sports games' code," says. Thomas, "Inid a to of a lower yearbook, may have code if you want to continue to a stocker. In the contract of the contract to charge something, you have to go back in and recomplex it Whey got all this sust are up with tables so we roally can adjust the way the blocking works in under to seconds."

To demonstrate, he indesigns the pass-blocking assignments for the 4Pers offensive line with a few loopstrates, changing the curvature of the pass-protection pocket. This just makes it a lot simpler," he says. "You don't have to remember any variable names Siverything is right in front of you...—if you want to change during versus spins versus stiff arms I mean, all that stuff is right here."

moen, all that stuff is right here."
The team is himsessing this editor to create team-specific playbooks, but more importantly, they want the All teams to replicate these plays as would their real world counterparts. "We actually have all of the data for that," Thomas says, "teams tendencies, what they do, how the teams actually play, if the Nines are third and short, they're going to do a start past to lerry new.

But hold on, Isn't Visual Concepts the same team that failed to deliver Medichin '94 to the Psystation' Thome of the people who worked on Maddon '96 are here now," siys Tim Walter, Vic's director of technology. "There have been mastakes, made, but we're not making those missakes again."

The powerful tools and state of playability of NFL Football — even in mid-March — suggest the game will be ready on time, and in a more playable state than Middlen '96 Building the game from scratch has

HOUSE OF TRUSKS AND THE PROBLEM OF T

SIN DE STEEN STEEN LONGAN

An uninterrupted-season mode will enable you to play right on through your season without ever having to avid out to a manu screen

made the process an entirely different one from the

one inomes nimited describes as a faissco."

When we were working with EA," Thomas says,
"they ran the show. They told you what you could and
outdn't change. We were using 3DO AI code that we
didn't write. In this game, it's all us." Thomas also adds
that it was the company's first attempt at writing a
game outside of machine language, ther first CD.

game, and their first 30 game.

'It was very pointful for me, personally," says

Thomse of the Asciden '96 project. "If mast very lucky
and hoppy to have a chance to do it again, the web

believe is the right way to develop a game "Thomas
sounds confident, and from what Next Generation
has seen, he has every reason to be Considering that
this may be the single most important size.

launch in Sega history, that's good news.

is grant name work gar if the earls name work is grant name to not through a first to such. The glammics this me is that the game is ornor-themed, and you less blow apart zombie

rest now apart zomoles rest often dish restarts white protecting he imposent is works sessitively — except for he insone level of liffically brought over rom the arcada, which will frustrate even the

difficulty brought over from the accide, which will frustrate even the most skilled snot. The militorie paths to Milwe are more, but uncleasely been be nothing have or sactions, Add to the mix a lains story and the ments viole acting NAVY Teams, and the tribe falls to improve the country of the tribe of the country of the country of the tribe of the country of the country of the tribe of the country of the country of the country of the tribe of the country of the cou

RATING ***



It may be pretty and fastpaced, but there's nothin



Climax Graphics' otherwise brilliant debut

is marred by a seriously wacky camera

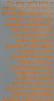
rom the get-go, it's obvious Blue Stinger's been designed to kick Resident Evil's ass The atmosphere, the graphics, the soundtrack, and even Sega the ambience scream, "We do cinematic horror/action better than anybody else "The Climax Graphics Resident Evil clone is quickly becoming a staple in Japan, but so solid is Climax Graphics' freshman Out now effort (it's a new division of Climax, which brought us Landstalker and Dark Savior), it's easy to believe Japan the company could become the Rolling Stones to

Capcom's Beatles

Like Capcom's now-classic zombie game and the forthcoming Dino Crisis (page 40), Blue Stinger is designed to make you feel that you're playing through a movie. The concept here. Aurassic Park. meets X-Files meets Army of Darkness The game begins with a long six-minute opening sequence that introduces the extinction of the dinosaurs, the meteor that does the extinction, Elliot Ballade (a vacationing officer of an elite police force), enigmatic



PUBLISHER: DEVELOPER:



Climax Graphics, began his game career 10 years ago, working for Enix on titles like Dragon W He moved on to work on Shining Force and Londstolker for Genesis and was director on Lodystolker for Super NES and Dork Sovier for Saturn. We caught up with Mr. Nishigaki to talk about Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, and the split between Climax Graphics and Climax Entertainment

Shinya Nishigaki, president of

Next Generation: When as Climax Graphics founded, and what urged you to separate from Climax Entertainment? Shinya Nishigaki: (limax Graphics was established in December 1996 as a "brother empany" of Climax Entertainment. which Hiroshi Nalto runs. I worked as Naito's right-hand man from 1990 until 1996. Around this time it became a necessity, in order to



fille Blue Stinger has its share of exciting sequences, there is also a deep storyline for you to discover

An Audience with Shinya Nishigaki

keep up with the market, to improve the graphical quality of our games. I had the idea to gather a p together that wo ated to creating high-end hics, so I then became the president of the independent Climax Graphics. But CG and Climax are constantly exchan their resources. Climax provides us with programming technology, and we give them our graphics technology.

NG: Why the name "Climax Graphics"? Are you mainly concentrating on high-end graphics - i.e., will we see you working in other areas, like in the movie industry, in commercials, or doing film sequences for other companies' games? EN: Climax Graphics also means "CG" if you look at the initials. We came up with this name because

we thought it would convey the



The game follows the familiar linear pattern established by Capcom, and the gameplay -talking to characters to obtain clues, finding keys. and solving puzzles by moving boxes and hitting switches - will be familiar as well. Like any title in this genre, there are benefits and disadvantages to this method - it helps retain a coherent storyline. but can create immense frustration in a player who knows that a napalm launcher should be able to defrost a frozen door just as easily as the 'required' card key

Still. Climax added a couple of touches that integrate the puzzles better. Little features like goals with time limits and minigames within the overall quest make Blue Stinger feel somewhat RPG-ish and also help to both increase dramatic tension and keep things from getting too serious The best new element, though, is the use of environmental details like door numbers and wall scrawlings as keys to a solution. Dreamcast's texture-mapping abilities are good enough to force the player to see the level as a true environment rather than just a series of corridors

The pacing is significantly more action-oriented than other Resident Evil-style games. Rather than just finding weapons, players can slaughter

TELIOT-

obile camera enables some fairly spectacular screenshots, but it makes playing time much tougher than it should be. Hopefully this will change for the U.S. rele

spirit of the company. Now we are constantly forced to turn down offers! [laughs] Many people have asked us to do CG films, especially with the fast-growing number of Japanese TV channels and the resulting lack of actual shows. Our relatively limited staff of 18 people couldn't handle a game and a movie at the same time, though,

NG: With you specializing in games and CG, can we expect you to be a strong competitor of Square's in the near future? SIN: Right now, I will take this as a joke! [laughs] But now that I think of it. Square started out with a team of merely 10 people 10 years ago. So maybe a decade from now, we really will be able to compete with them. [laughs]

CG and Sega NG: How close has your collaboration with Sega been? The company has treated you almost like a first-party developer. SIM: From the beginning, we

were respected for being a brother company of Climax and because we have only dealt with Sega so far. Sega has been treating us very

NG: What do you think about Dreamçast's situation in Japan right now? Sales have been quite inting, and PSX2 just recently stole its show. What does games - just look at how one game, Pokemon, saved Nintendo in Japan! [laughs]

NG: Sega seems to be expecting a lot from Blue Stinger, especially considering the fact that big titles like Sonic Adventure did not sell as well as expected. IN: Blue Stinger is the first fully polygonal action/adventure

usa?

SIN: Sega's official numbers say that the maximum polygon power of Dreamcast is around three million per second. In reality, when the hardware has to calculate all the effects, sounds, etc., Dreamcast can't push more than 1.5 million polys per second. We started working on Blue Stinger when the

hardware power does Blue Stinger

"Just look at how one game, Pokemon, saved Nintendo in Japan."

Sega's future look like, in your

SIN: It's a very difficult question for me to answer, although I have been working very closely with Sega in the past few years. They are spending 20 times more money on promoting and marketing Dreamcast than they did with Saturn, which can only help. Sega is definitely in a tough situation at the moment, but we have to wait and see. It all depends on the

(after this, there will be Shenmue, D2, and Resident Evil). I find this particular genre ideal to experience the full potential of the Dreamcast hardware, and I guess that is why Sega is giving us full support. They also find the idea attractive that a small company like us is able to make such a highend game. [laughs]

game to be released on Dreamcast

NG: How much of Dreamcast's

hardware and development kit weren't yet finalized. Given that, Blue Stinger calculates only around 600,000 at peak moments. So we use less than 50% of its

Dreamcast and its competition NG: PlayStation 2 is approximately 20 times more powerful than Dreamcast. Do you think maybe that Sega cared more







tile Blue Stinger may not threaten Resident Evil's crown, it features some nicely signed monsters as well as an excessive amount of gore

typically Japanese form of entertainment, you could say it's the videogame console. Blue Stinger is thus an homage

about being the first 128-bit console manufacturer on the SIN: If you ask me, I think that

market than about being the Dreamcast yet. There is a technical "ceiling" at the moment that only very large companies can "I think that the 'console war' has reached

ridiculous heights... What the averaga buy the "console war" has reached ridiculous heights, and the media is hyping this issue a great deal. What the average buyer really

hardware specs are. NG: Will you be developing games for the next PlayStation? SIN: With our current team size, it would take us at least four years to make Blue Stinger for PlayStation 2! In fact, I think that of the roughly 500 Japanese videogame developers, only three or four have the needed technical,

nam, and financial resources to

develop for PlayStation 2 at this

cares about are the actual games,

no matter how powerful the

break - and PlayStation 2 coes far beyond these limits. I thus see a big chance for Dreamcast to

time. Come to think of it, many

aren't even ready to develop for

Blue Stinger and the U.S. ING: Blue Stinger has a very movie-like, "Hollywood" feel to it. Why did you opt for this particular style?

SIN: I've always been a film freak. My father worked for a company importing films to Japan. I was thus heavily influenced by foreign movies, especially by American films because they mainly focus on enterta people. If you're looking for a

to American film in the form

of a videocame.

ING: You hired American movie specialists to work on Blue Stinger How did your collaboration come about, and how did you like working with Americans? SIN: In 1985, a large Hollywood special-effects convention was held in Japan to which many SFX artists were invited. I was a university student back then and met one of the staff members who introduced me to several Hollywood SFX specialists. As a result, Academy Award winner Robert Short (for Beetlejuice) did the creature design for Blue Stinger and created the 3D models.

Pete Von Sholly, who did storyboards for The Mosk and Mors Attacks, worked as our camera work supervisor. We also hired four ional actors to perform the character voices. I am very satisfied with all the work the American side did - not only that, they were all great people to work

enemies for cold cash, which can then be redeemed at vending machines for anything from the local soft drink to railguns or a lightsaber. Each controllable character has different strengths, weaknesses, and different types of weapons Combat is singularly satisfying. Few sights are more gratifying than hacking limbs and heads off by delivering thick, meaty chops with an axe or setting monsters on fire with a napalm launcher. The weapon effects and the environments are delivered with graphics of the like

that have arguably never been seen before Climax's delivery of the detailed environments is flawless. While much of the geometry is not that complex, every polygon is meticulously, exquisitely textured. Hello Market is festooned with discount. signs, neon-lights, and incessantly cheerful Christmas decorations, fulling you into actually expecting shoppers there rather than giant crab monsters Other areas, like the boardwalk bathrooms and strip club, are cleverly designed and brought to life to the point that there are times when Dinosaur Island is almost real Unfortunately, many players won't be able to get that far Not that the game is bad, but the camera control is flat-out bizarre. Whatever intelligence Climax used for the game design failed

the game almost unplayable. It lags too far behind, doesn't turn corners fast enough, and

> NIG: Speaking of America, what changes can we expect to see in the U.S. version of Blue Stinger? SIN: When making the American versions of Londstolker and Dork Sovier, I realized that U.S. consumers prefer to play more difficult games than the Japanese While the average Japanese gamer doesn't like to see the main character dying in the game, it doesn't seem to bother American gamers too much. [laughs] We will thus tweak the difficulty level and make battles tougher for the U.S. We will also change certain visual aspects in the game, e.g. some things aimed specifically at the

Japanese audience and some

re are a number of different environments in the game, and the sheer number of textures make exp file the gameolay was very linear, we never found ourselves bored with where we were in the game

overcompensates for the player's every action. That means that for 95% of the time the player spends indoors, the angle is too high, too low, nowhere close to the character, too close to the character, facing something solid, or a combination of all of them. Take six or seven of those in the space of a few seconds and nausea is sure to follow It discourages exploration, makes the map virtually useless when trying to navigate on the fly, and frequently changes combat into something overly complex. Minor interface and graphics problems. pale in comparison to this senous flaw. The camera may work well for creating dramatic, movie-like views, but it simply does not work well in a videogame.

If it weren't for the camera control, Blue Stinger could be a senous challenge to Capcom's Code. Veronica in its current form, though, the one flaw is enough to keep all but the dedicated from playing Which is a shame, because few games so far have demonstrated the power of Dreamcast like Blue Stager — the expansive environments and beautiful textures are unrivaled, except possibly by Sonic Unfortunately, though, the camera forced us to rate the game only as "fun," not as excellent or revolutionary If it is tweaked before release in the U.S., expect to see one - or two - stars added.

RATING

elements that might be read as too provocative (alcohol, women, etc.) in the United States. We'll also add some hidden bonuses, like extra costumes, etc.

Blue Stinger the game NO: Four characters from General Entertainment's Dreamcast racer, Pen Pen Tricelon, are making a special appearance in Blue Stinger. How did that rather peculiar cameo appearance come

BIN: Daisaku Keijiri, the ducer of Pen Pen, is a good friend of mine. So we just went for it. [laughs]

NG: It has become very popular to have playable female characters such as Lara Croft. Why Isn't Elliot's love interest, Janine, a playable character? SIN: I must admit that we didn't have the time to make her a playable character. Hey, but you can see pictures of lanine wearing various bikinis if you load the game into your computer's CD-ROM drive, though! [laughs] Expect to see a female playable character in our next game, though

NG: Are you talking about Sive Stinger 2 for Dreamcast? SIN: I can't reveal the specifics, but our next project is definitely going to be a Dreamcast game.

NG: All right, so what improvements or changes would you make if there were a Blue ger 2?

SIN: We would, of course, try to use 100% of the console's hardware power this time. We would also have the two "buddles" onscreen during actual gameplay (which our engine didn't allow us to do in the first game) and thus have the accompanying character help out the gamer in tricky situations and fights.

NG: That sounds very similar to the original concept of Activision's Anneniumen - which was eventually scrapped and replaced with a standard one-player

SN: Actually, we already completed the Al for the "buddy" character, and it would have worked fine if the engine had allowed us to calculate the two characters at the same time. We even used Dogs for "comic relief" and he would randomly start skating, sleeping, drinking, etc. and reacting to the player's actions. Oh well, maybe next time?

NG: You personally presented Blue Stinger at the Game Developers Conference in March. How did American developers and press members welcome the game? SN: The game received very good reactions and probably has a tter recognition here in the United States than it has in Japan. I was surprised to see people rushing to Sega's booth when they heard that our game was being presented. Overall, it was a great experience, and I can't wait for the II.S. release!

FORMAT: Greamrast PUBLISHER: CSK

DEVELOPER:



Thanks to Accolade, U.S.-bred giant robots

are coming to Dreamcast



FORMAT-DEVELOPER:



While the military may try to stop you, the sheer size of your Slave makes it prohibitive to stand in the way

ulking mechanical warriors have long been an icon of Japanese pop culture and have proved a popular export to the U.S. with properties like Robotech, Transformers, and Voltron, After more than two years in development on PC, Accolade is betting that its home-grown giant-robot game, Slave Zero, is unique and exciting enough to make an impact on Dreamcast

"We didn't want anime style in our game." explains Matt Powers, producer on the Slave Zero team, "We obviously used some for inspiration, like Macross and Evengelion, but we've Americanized it He's not kidding - the game's setting is much more Ridley Scott than Yoshiyuki Tomino, Cars fly along

futuristic skyways through the shadows of skyscrapers that go up hundreds of stones. It's a hard-edged version of a future gone hombly wrong Players pilot a newly designed combat robot

called a Slave. Each Slave is a biomechanical monster many stones high that doesn't so much need a pilot to fly it as to meld with and control it. Obviously, there are some advantages to this: Slaves are faster, stronger, and more maneuverable than than older.

inorganic mechs Gameplay focuses on your escape from a rival city-state with the stolen prototype Slave (Slave Zero, in fact) and your subsequent assault on the aerie of Soukhan, the evil warlord who controls the city The



The game has many platforming elements, but the primary focus is combat between heavily armed mecha



in contrast to traditional giant robots, the Slave is highly maneuverable and can dodge and weave like a human

we've come to expect from a grant-robot game "The idea from the start was to make an action game," says Powers, "so levels have been designed as a number of short engagements with other robots instead of longer battles like we usually see"

Powers acknowledges that the sense of scale in the game is just as important as the action. At sixty feet tall, the Slave is much bigger than the conventional forces -- in turn, the city is that much more immense than the Slave. Creating a realistic city. that is still open enough for combat with five-story-tall monsters has been a major design challenge. Each level brings you closer to your goal of reaching Soukhan's perch, and as you get to the higher levels, the environment reflects these great heights by becoming more open and much more dangerous. The levels also become much more vertically oriented, so that by the end of the game you jump and climb rather than run to reach Soukhan's lair Since combat with other robots is the defining

aspect of the game, it is fitting that the team has spent a lot of time making it as fun as possible, largely through the fully interactive environment. Players can

stomp on passing cars or pick them up and throw them at an attacking enemy. Ground-based troops make particularly amusing targets, and it is mighty tempting to hang around and stomp on soldiers (or pick them up and throw them into walls) when given the chance. Even gyrllans aren't immune to your presence: when a battle is fought, cars will skild out around your feet and pedestrians will run for cover The game world isn't just a place to run around in anymore - it's an entity in itself that reacts appropriately to you and your actions

Although Accolade feels a pure PC port would be good enough to stand on its own in the Dreamcast market, multiplayer options will be enhanced with a split-screen four-player mode (internet play is still undetermined, largely because Sega has yet to provide details to U.S. developers on its internet plans). Graphics will be similar, although the team will have several months after the PC release to refine the look of the game and give it some console-specific touches. If the final version looks and fee's as good as we're hoping, Slave Zero could be a brave new step into the realm of action gaming and proof that Japan doesn't have a monopoly on giant robots.

PUBLISHER:











You can use the environments to your advantage. Destroy buildings only to salvage their girders as weapon

Capcom Capcom

Japan





hile the Dreamcast installment of the popular survival horror title is still in its early stages, it's hard not to be excited by what we've seen so far The storyline takes place in Europe this time around, and The storyline revolves around Claire's continuing quest. to find her brother after the events of RE2. She travels

to Europe and sneaks into a secret Umbrella Lab. where she is captured. She is then transferred to a place called the Umbrella Prison, where she is held captive. She is soon rescued by an Umbrella employee named Rodrigo and escapes into the building just as a large explosion goes off nearby. She opens the door



ent takes place after RE2 and follows Claire's adventures in trying to find her brother Chris



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THE NEW WIRELESS

ALPHAS

Our monthly report from the front line of games in development





 3. The Extra Extravagant Expo hits Los Angeles just as this issue hits the shelf But we've done our homework and rounded up many of those showstoopers right here



PlayStation

auntlet Legends FleyStetion, N64



a look PlayStation, PC



Throne of Darkness











50	Sled Storm	PlayStatio











MILESTONES

RESIDENT EVIL: NEWESIS	PleyStation	63
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GAUNILEI LEGENDS

An arcade classic that received a classic updating is headed home — and the results may surprise you



tari's 30 update of the arcade classic Gauntiet was, in a word, terrific, retaining the core gameplay values of the original while giving the series a graphical facellit. As with any successful arcade tible lespecially one from Atari Gamesi, console versions.



A note about which screen shots are from which system: If there are two character boxes at the bottom, it's the PlayStation version

are inevitable.

Atan, however, a going through a lot of time and effort to ensure that the PlayStation and Mintendo 64 versions are significantly deeper gameplay experiences than the arcade game. Nintendo 64 version Producer's Scot. Amos jokes, "The arcade version was designed to suck your quarters. With the home versions, we've got all your quarters us from the possibility of possibi

That means out unlike in the That means but unlike in the arradis, your health wordt steadyl drop as you piley and both home versions have a number of additional worlds. Also, the structure of the game has been altered dightly. We've really, Producer inoward Left says. "There's a quest cycle, seven expects which moved questions are consistent of the pour whack the bosses." These lems of ligend are scattered throughout the games world, and fring them inchest.





On the other hand, the N64 version is instantly recognizable thanks to its four-player setup

FORMAT PlayStation, Nintendo 64

PUBLISHER Midway DEVELOPER

Atari/Blam RELEASE DATE July

ORIGIN





The expanded game world has enabled the developers - Atan itself is handling the Nintendo version, while San Francisco-based Blam is working on the PlayStation port - to include subquests, hidden areas, and placing a greater emphasis on gaining experience and building up your character's abilities. This has also made the home versions much less linear than the arcade, leaving you at your lessure to explore worlds in any order and fashion you choose. Even better, after playing for a time and getting a character "beefed up," in both versions you and a friend can plug your memory cards in and use your powered-up characters in a joint adventure.



The home versions have new levels and enemies, and all the old ones too

In addition to expanding the expenence and oustomizing it for the home player, the developers are also making sure that each version suits its





In general, the PlayStation version has more detailed and colorful textures then those found on Nintendo 64





The arrows that told you which way to go are missing from the hon versions — you've got all the time you need to find your way

respective system. Left reclaims, 1 set out to design platform-specific products I definit want to get caught in the trace of making it exactly like the arcade version for the home. The platforms have their own strengths, and they both do great things, but they're different things to the games are good to be different on the different platforms have they define the design of th

For example, although the N64 version will use a feMS cartridge, thanks to the vestly greater storage capacity of CDs, the PlayStation version will offer two more worlds than the N64, the lungle and Desert areas, for a total of nine. The tradeoff, of course, is that thanks to the extra controller ports, the Nintendo version will enable up to four players at a time.

There are other, subtler, differences as well. In general, the N64 version has flashier special effects, dynamic lighting, and roughly one-third more enemies onscreen at once. Cut scenes





The characters from the arcade have been faithfully re-created









contact, sports higher resolution teatures and more of them. Ask, the cut scenes are pre-rendered FMV, and you'll notice a greater vanety of sound effects in fact, by and large, the PlayStation version seems to have more detail overall. Matt. Seymour of Blam says, "We're carming it in it's amazing how close we are to the accode in how good the characters lock, in the teatures, in the gometry, Lock at the teatures, in the gometry, Lock at the contact the agriculture.

and other storytelling moments are told

by using scripted sequences within the

game engine itself, and digitized

Yet the two versions have more in common than they do differences. Both support analog control and controller feedback, and contain the same eight characters — warnor, valisyne wzard, and archer, each of which has a "hidden" version, the minotaur, falconess, jackyl, and tigress, respectively. Many members of the same team that designed the original acade version are pliching in with design assistance to further the goal of

respectively. Many members of the same team that designed the original accade version are profining in with design assissance to further the goal of keeping the series consistent, because above all, both versions must convey the series of overwhelming dods that characterizes the series. The game is based on that flow of enemies," Lehr entitiuses, "that onsistant large number of enemies coming after you. Without that, it's not Gaundet."

Remarkably, however, both home versions are stated for a simultaneous release late this summer. Teating two games on totally different systems out at the same time — especially with games of this size and magnitude — that ain't an easy thing to do." Lehr admits, then assures us, "but the ducks are in a row right now, and we're sure we din to the."





Adding adventure elements will definitely increase the replay value



support analog cont







The N64 version boasts a large number of flashy lighting effects, and a 4MB expansion pak cranks up the resolution considerab



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Typas of dinosaurs the player will encounter include numerous reptors, a Y-Rex, and some grabby pterodactyls



found throughout tha gama, hinting at passwords and giving clues and backstory

version of the game was an amazing experience. The Resident Earl influence is clear, but with a completely new storyine, settling, and several new species of antagoniats, the overall experience is fresh and more exciting than ever. Indeed, the only disappointment came when capcom insisted that we leave their office, which ad been closed for some time. The fact is, even at this stage, Dinn Crisis aready offers hours of posited gampelys.

While the game is not set in the Resident Evil universe, the scenario is familiar enough to anyone who's played Mikami's previous works.

Players assume the role of a government special-forces agent named Regina, who — along with a rockle agent named Rick and a hardned, square-jawed agent named Gale — must investigate the mysterous island laborationy of a scientist named Nr. Kirk. Of course, when the player arrives on the Island, the lab is deserted, and the player's investigation begans. It's crity moments before a victim's remains are found and not leng after that the titual criticosaurs make their first appearance. Your job. Tind Kirk, discover if there is any relationship between the coloron's work and the dinosaurs thint:

there B., duft), and escape alive.
Is your Spielberg alarm sounding?
Mikami freely admits that Jurassic Park
was his primary inspiration.
Considering the trouble DreamWorks
has had with the franchise, it's amazing
to see the outstanding level of
suspense and action the game builds
with its high-quality dinosaur models.





Maat Ragina, a battlehardened agent who remains calm even in the face of velociraptors







you something. But there's always the risk of a glant T-Rex head busting through a window to swallow you whole







Keening with the formula that made Resident Evil and Resident Evil 2 so successful. Dino Crisis gamenlay combines exploration, puzzle-solving, and fight-or-flight survival elements. Considering that the player begins the game with a pistol that is fairly ineffective against the dinosaurs, players will be running from them more often than not throughout the first half of the game - at least until a shotzun and





The raptors pounce, bite, and tail-whip characters - more terrifyingly, they can even knock your gun away

emphasize enough how frightening the dinosaurs are. The raptors pounce, bite. and tail-whip characters - but even more terrifyingly, they can knock the

player's gun away As expected, there's pienty of landscape to cover, including the interior and extenor of the lab and the staple underground facilities (expect the game to be longer than Resident Evil 2). Many areas are locked from the outset, with

Expect familiar spi of blood when the player collides with a dinosau

AN AUDIENCE WITH SHINJI MIKAMI

t's quite a leap to go from creating Disney games like Goof Troop to Resident Evil, but that's what Shinji Mikami did when Capcom started gearing up for PlayStation development in 1994. Why the switch? "I was ordered to." answers Mikami. Clearly, his bosses knew what they were doing: Resident Evil has been a huge critical and sales success for Capcom on three continents. Now, while nominally producer of RE: Nemesis for PlayStation (see the first shots in Milestones, page 63) and Biohazord: Code Veronico (see the latest shots in Dreamcast Countdown, page 30), Mikami is focusing his day-to-day energies on Capcom's latest franchise bid: Dino Crisis. Next Generation caught up with him at Cancom's Osaka HO.

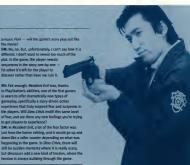
Next Generation: The inspiration for Resident Evil seems at least to be partly based on George Romero's movies, like Night of the Living Dea that was your inspiration for Dino Crisis? Shinii Mikami: Actually, it was another film. Maybe you've seen Jurassic Park? [Laughs]

NG: The setup of the game certainly parallels

the movie? SM: No, no. But, unfortunately, I can't say how it is different. I don't want to reveal too much of the plot, in the game, the player reveals sequences in the story one-by-one -I'd rather it's left for the player to discover rather than have me ruin it.

NG: Fair enquely. Resident Evil was, thanks to PlayStation's abilities, one of the first ga in years to offer dramatically new types of gameplay, specifically a story-driven action experience that truly inspired fear and suspense i the players, Will Dino Crisis instill this same level of fear, and are there any new feelings you're trying to get players to experience?

SM: In Resident Evil, a lot of the fear factor was just from the horror setting, and it would go up and own like a roller coaster depending on what was hangening in the game. In Dino Crisis, there will still be sudden moments where it is really scary, but dinosaurs add a new kind of tension, where the tension is always building through the game.







The inventory system provides five slots for weapons, ammo, and healing power-ups. Players now have an unlimited item page so they can carry as many keys or puzzle pieces as they want

small areas coming unlocked periodically to advance gameplay. Survive a stage and collect the right keys, then a cinematic cut scene will explain what's been unlocked and what the next mission objective is.

To compensate for the lack of replayability that an alternate main character would add, the storyline splits at several points, at which time the player must choose a subquest. The first one comes when Regina is forced to side with Gale or Rick as they debate

over whether to rescue a scientist or a member of their team. These branching subquests eventually weave back into the main storyline.

The puzzles will definitely be more of a challenge in Dino Crisis than in Resident Evil. The player's inventory has been expanded to hold an unlimited amount of objects (ammo and weapons excluded), so there are lots more keys and ID cards to find, Besides standard door/key problems, there are many



ms still load with an "opening door transition, but now they actually show the e door, if Regina is

Dinosaurs themselves just add an entirely new dimension, If you think about it, they're really tening, and I want to describe that in the game. Unlike zombies, dinosaurs can chase you and catch you, and because we are using skinned models, without joints, we can let the dinosaur get very close to the player, which can be very scaryl

NG: What game are you spending the most time on - this or one of the Resident Evil games? SM: Definitely Dino Crisis. I am producing the other games, but this is the one I am spending the most time on. I love Resident Evil, but I felt that I needed some variation in my routine, since I had done so many Resident Evil games already!

NG: Outside of work, do you see horror movies or read horror stories?

SM: Yes, I see all the big horror films, and specifically I enjoy reading Japanese horror auth Edogawa Rampo, whose name is a play on Edgar Allan Poe. And I read lots of horror comics.

NG: In a horror movie or book, you watch or read what happens to a character. In a horror game, you are the character. Are games the best medium to express horror?

SM: Well, in certain ways it is the best medium, ecause in a videogame you can control the



"In Dino Crisis, there will still be sudden moments where it is really scary, but dinosaurs add a new kind of tension. where the tension is always building"

character, so you feel the shock when things happen. At the same time, in a videogame we can't describe how you are actually feeling, internally, moment to moment. This can be done best in books, and secondarily in movies. So we cannot tell you what you should be feeling. Videogames need their "horror factor" to be a lot more concentrated. It's also touch because you don't control the pacing. like you can in a movie. You never know where a player will want to go next. But we solve this by setting some parameters or objectives that the player must achieve before enabling them to go further into the game.

NG: Although Resident Evil certainly owes a debt to Alone in the Dark, it pioneered many concepts that have now become very commonplace in games, even down to characters - it's hard to find does it feel to have paved this way that so many are following?

a game today that doesn't have zombies in it. How SM: Well, I feel pretty pleased in some ways, of

course! But still, there are so many followers that are trying to make their own Resident Full games. today - I want to see designers become a lot more creative, exploring new possibilities. It's not very exciting for me to be looking at so many people just following my ideas blindly.

NG: Was this part of the reason for making Dino Crisis instead of working on another Resident Evil game? SM: Yes, of course.

NG: What do you see as the biggest improvemen Dino Crisis makes over the games in the Resident Evil series?

SM: Well, the biggest, of course, is the fully polyeonal world: it's not pre-rendered like Resid Evil, so we can change the camera angles on the fly. Since one area can now seen from several different angles, it gives us the ability to create more action, although it's tough, because we have to design a camera system so that it can cover all



other environmental puzzles to solve as well, including getting several generators running, Another major puzzle theme involves DDKs, or digital disc keys. Players must first find three discs of the same markings to form one key, and then, after finding the right door to use

correct password from a cryptography word-puzzle. The cryptographs start out fairly easy but increase considerably in difficulty

Mikami's group has taken advantage of the fully 3D environments to set a new standard of cinematic camerawork, keeping fantastic

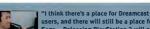




When bleeding, pli leave a blood trail



mid air with a shoteun



the possible potential areas. Otherwise, the camera misses the character, and that's obviously not acceptable! [Laughs]

NG: There wasn't much change in the puzzles between Resident Evil and Resident Evil 2. Have there been big changes with Dino Crisis? SM: Probably two-thirds of the puzzles in the game will be familiar to anyone who played Resident Evil, but we are introducing some new code-solving puzzles. At first, these puzzles look like weird combinations of letters, but when you really look at it and figure out what rules can be applied there, suddenly you can understand the message needed to open the doors. Also, of course, the dinosaurs change the gameplay. You can't just run away from them like you do with a zombie, although you can shoot the dinosaurs with a tranquilizer weapon. Other times you will need to press a button to close a door or shudder before a dinosaur catches you, or find a place to hide.

users, and there will still be a place for Sega... Releasing PlayStation 2 will not eliminate the Dreamcast market"

> NG: Will the level of difficulty change when the game is localized for the U.S.? SM: Yes, the puzzles will be a lot tougher.

NG: Why do you think U.S. gamers like their games more difficult than Japanese gamers? SM: I think the difference between Japanese players and American players is that Japanese players get bored with a game more easily. If they get too frustrated, they'll guit the game, So I just have to keep the players concentrated on the game and instruct them about what they're supposed to do next - otherwise, they won't complete the game.

But U.S. players will always try to feel like they have achieved something themselves, on their own power, or of their own effort. That's completely opposite to the way of playing leogames in our nation. So right now, we sign the game for a Japanese level of difficulty, with plenty of hints, then we modify it for the erican market afterward.

NG: Would you rather not give out hints to the game?

SM: i'd rather not give out too many hints. NG: Is Dino Crisis set in the same world as

sident Evil? Could there be a crossover gar here the S.T.A.R.S. team ever came to the island - Resident Evil Vs. Dino Crisis? SM: No, there's no relation between the two

NG: What do you think of PlayStation 2? SM: Spec-wise, right? It's unbelievable, I have no complaints at all - but at the same time, when you look at PlayStation 2 specs, you're looking at the specs used by movie companies in Hollywood. These entertainment glants can join in and do the same quality work as traditional videogame companies have, with their special-effects houses and their own expertise. So, we're going to have a lot tougher competition because the expertise of a videogame company is working under technical limitations. That has been our specialty, but there are no technical limitations anymore. Now, it's all

NG: Still, Hollywood has tried making games fore and didn't do a very good job. Don't traditional game creators have an inherent

about artistic talent.











continuity with the in-game

environment. In one cinematic

sequence, a velociraptor knocks Regina

Even unpolished, the sound design is once again masterfully subtle. The game opens at night, and while we

never see the island's shore, the sound of the surf pounding the sand plays rhythmically in the background. The orchestral soundtrack supports the action with feature-film-quality scoring. and the dialogue (finally) doesn't come off as forced or cheesy.

Frankly, the detail in Dino Crisis, such as when the unsettling sky animates with ominous scrolling clouds, almost elevates it to interactive poetry. And after seeing the way Capcom has even animated the little moths flitting in the lamplight outside the lab, we're ready to put Mikami alongside Spielberg in his ability to combine the natural world with that of fantasy - keeping us believing every step of the way.





advantage in creating interactive media? SM: Sure, but that assumes that the things that Maybe there will be new things, new kinds of experiences that aren't strictly games or strictly movies, and game companies may not have any intage there. Games, videos, music CDs, they could all come together, so there will be more than just games on the system

NG: When you saw PlayStation 2 for the first time. did you get some game ideas? Things you maybe always wanted to do, that weren't possible before? SM: For the first time, I thought, "Human characters can have real personalities in gar For the first time, we'll see humans as real

NG: What do you think of Dreamcast in light of PlayStation 2 now? SM: I'm a firm believer in Sega, they have more than 10 years' history. So I think there's a place for Dreamcast users, and there will still be a place for will not eliminate the Dreamcast market. In that respect. PlayStation 2 may not be successful. because it's still up in the air and there is no established Sony user base that has continued to iovally buy only Sony PlayStation games. So those users who will always be faithful to Sega.

NG: OK, so, bottom line, which new platform ites you more? SM: Actually, it's Game Boy Color right now!

NG: Game Boy Color? Why?

you can really just have symbols onscreen. But with Game Boy Color, you can have good graphics that show real things, but still, the graphics are solimited that you are forced to make the gameplay the thing that you focus the most on. So, right ow, that's my main hardware interest.

NG: What are your favorite ga of Capcom games? SM: Zelda 64.

NG: Do you play a lot of PC games? SM: I don't play one game for too long a time. I try a lot of games, but usually only for so minutes each, just long enough to get a taste, both for PC and video games.

NG: Except for Zeldo? SM: Zelda... [Laughs] Well, Zeldo's my hobby.



THE RETURN OF ATARI

Can Hasbro Interactive bring back the old glory of this once and future brand?

Ittle more than a year ago, statch interactive cornor the deal of the century when It bought on the century when It bought on the century when It bought on the interactive than It is the interactive than It is interactive than It is the It is board at the letter a lagar begging (Trainte family included, and relaurch the Atair Izand with pudates on the classic games that made the name saved in the first place.

"By the early '80s," says Hasbro spokesperson Dana Henry, "Nari had sold 130 million software units, with 2 billion dollars in sales," bill mumbers. And if the Hasbro corporation understands anything, it's appealing to the mass market. That's exactly what Rich Cleveland, Hasbro Interactive's director of marketing

wants to bring Atan back to.
"We got some wonderful titles, some
wonderful gamepity, and some
wonderful property of the
wonderful property of the
wonderful history," says Cleveland of
the acquisition. "We want to take all
those components and rebuild the
Atan braind to be the preeminent,
action games brand." But Cleveland is
quick to add, "We're taking ownership

We know there a lot of dedicated tari fans, and we don't want to isappoint them"

of the Atari brand seriously, we know there a lot of dedicated Atari fans, and we don't want to disappoint them." Of course, as any classic fan would quickly point out, plenty of retro gamers were disappointed by Hasbro's



Q*bert

Abstract and lovable, O*bert was ahead of his time as his self-titled. puzzle/platform-hopper hybrid crossed the genre lines before they were drawn Q*bert's modern world features expanded levels, but the object of the gameplay remains the same: hop across blocks to change their colors while avoiding that nasty snake Colly. (The ability to accidentally jump to your death should also be part of the experience.) The original Q*bert will be included, but the classic code has been harnessed to a new 3D engine. The playfield will now be rendered in true will be exactly the same. Digital Eclipse, the developer responsible for compiling the Midway and Atari Classic Collections, provided the O*bert emulation. The Q-man has also been given a bit of a story for his update, as he now must rescue the lovely(?)

O*dina from the wizard of the Z-

dimension. Quite

FORMA PC, PrayStatio PUBLISHE

RELEASE DATE
PlayStation: summer 1999
PC: fall 1999

ORIGIN U.S.



Q-bert now hops through dynamically expanded worlds





Pong

NayStation levels, Next Generation





FORMAT PC, PlayStation PUBLISHER DEVELOPER 8 Tech



Pong mini-games, such as this one-player version of "wi penguin" bring variety to this simplest of simple games

Frogger, despite how well it sold. gger was almost Frogger-Mario at one point." Creative Director David Walls reveals, explaining that at one point the design had strayed almost completely from the original concept. so far as to incorporate free-roaming 3D environments.

"It takes time, and it's a challenge," Walls continues. "We learned a lot from Frogger, so we were able to do Centipede better, and we're still learning from Centipede, so all these other games are going to be "All these other games" Walls is

talking about include PlayStation and PC versions of O*bert, Pong, Missile Command, and Star Raiders. (Gottlieb did the original Q*bert, but it is a key part of the Atari era.) While not technically an Atari classic, Hasbro is also releasing The Next Tetris this summer, Ponz and O*bert are scheduled to appear this fall, Missile Command soon after those, and Star Raiders in early 2000. A Dreamcast

version of Missile Command is also planned for 2000 But back to Walls' point -- Hasbro

has learned. And throughout the company's presentation to Next Generation, gameplay is the issue it stresses most. Because the games are updates of classics, they are not going to be positioned as products that will introduce the next great 30 engine "We're dedicated to making great playing games," Walls says. "They'll be enhanced by the technology, but the technology cannot replace the play Capturing the essence of the

original arcade or 2600 version of a game is of paramount importance to Walls and Scott Balaban, Hasbro's inhouse designer on the Atari products. "The question we ask," says Walls, "is What would this game be if it was continued?" the way Mario was. Nobody ever says 'Look, they're redoing Mario again,' because it was continued, nurtured, and developed. These games got left behind, and





we're asking, 'What would Centipede be like if there was Centipede 2 through 5? What would Centipede 6

be like today?"

The one thing overyone agrees on is that the addicting gampalay must be minimized. One of the distinct gampalay must be minimized. One of the distinct gampalay must be minimized out of the distinct gampalay must be minimized out from a talk governing the enter bound. "We all if the Five Minimize Rule," says Cleveland, if if it is not Africagam, from instrust, and the gampalay distincts after you have the disk in your hand, your if it is not probable the gampalay which control as the gampalay the control are simple and minimized you when you fail, you minimized you when you fail, you minimized you when you fail, you minimized you when you fail, you



Unlike the Jaguar Missife Command, this version should retain gameplay

As Tetris was the game that launched a

it's very easy to say, 'I know what I did wrong' and hit restart." Sure enough, Pong, Q*bert, Missile

Command, and Star Raiders are ramping up to provide just that kind of experience. (Art assets were still early on the star Raiders and Missale Command, but Next Generation will have screenshots in future issues.) And with

"We call it the Five Minute Rule... If it's an Atari game, five minutes after you have the disc. you're playing the game"

11 classic Namico titles waiting to be tapped (see sidebar, p. 47) the Atari consumer brand may just be destined to flourish again. (It is even becoming its own business unit within Hasbro Interaction).

"But our vision extends beyond just relaunching old titles," says Cleveland. "We also want to create new content and a new identity for Atart. So we'll be developing some original contient." Why not? According to Wells, many developers are inquiring about classic properties like Adventure. We can hardly we can hardly we can braftly we

The Next Tetris



TNT challenges players to clear the preset (brown) blocks within a time limit

PC. PlayStation
PUBLISHER
Atar

RELEASE DATE Fall 1999 thousand clones, it's only fair that the Adam of falling-block games steals some innovation from the games it fathered. While the shapes remain unchanged, new color-gelling blocks (as seen in Puzzle Fighter) and cascading puzzle pieces (not unlike Puyo-Puyo) gameplay to make Tetris new again. It's likely to be just as addicting without clouding the identity of the original. The course, classic Tetris will be available as well. There's also one more '90s-style option: PlayStation owners tired of can swap out the game's tunes for a music CD of their own - just don't let us catch you inserting the Titanic soundtrack.



Finet: 7

Collapsing blocks — and blocks that gel to those like colors — change the gameplay just enough to make Tetris new again It's only a water drop but it's going to cause a tidal wave among PC gamers.



See the first splash at www.outcast-game.com









THRONE OF DARKNESS

Two Blizzard alumni bring a samural epic to the world of action-RPGs. Is it a Diablo assassin?





DEVELOPER

RELEASE DATE

Click Entertainment

s revealed in a news story in our April issue (NG \$2), two former Blizzard employees have left the Diablo team to form Click Entertainment. Their first project? A game that captures the fantasy of medieval Japan white advancing Diablo-style gameplay.

"The look we're going for is that of classic Jananese battle scrolls," says Click President and Lead Programmer Doron Gartner, "which were all isometric. They really fit in with our engine." The scrolls also dictated the look on the game: "The outdoor scenery is very Japanese, so it almost feels like you're playing a Japanese painting," says Vice President Ben Haas.

Gartner and Haas are avid fans of Kurosawa films, as the premise of Throne of Darkness shows. "I was reading about Kurosawa's Throne of Blood," Gartner says, "and it turns out the imagery he was going after in that movie was the isometric battle-scroll look. It's funny that

we picked up on the same concept." The game begins after a possessed warford raises an army of the undead to attack four castles that lie in the valley

below his mountain fortress The survivors are limited to those four warlords, each with only seven samural at their disposal. After choosing to play one of the warlords/castles under siege. the player must launch an offensive up the mountain to kill the dark warlord.

From the moment the game appears onscreen, its Diablo heritage is obvious. The isometric camera locks in on the player's samural, who viciously dismantle the undead soldiers with katanas. There's one big difference, however, the player's party consists of four samural selected from a group of seven - not one lone warrior. Accordingly, each samural is of the archetypal variety, and choices include an enormous warrior, a master swordsman, a stealthy ninja, a sorcerer,





A spell with e solid blest radius cen turn the tide of swerming er

















Former Meinframe Studios d Click to craete eo iderad cut ecenee

an archer, and a leader.

anything." In this title, though, the leader of the party will be more than a figurehead. The reason? Players have the unique ability to call what Haas describes as "plays." In realtime, these plays enable you to set up four samural in offensive and defensive formations, a key strategy element in ensuring the survival of your samurar. Each samurar will have this playcalling ability, and each will feature unique plays, "But," Heas continues, "the leader will be able to call more than any other

does a leader do? He doesn't really do

samurai, they'll only be in direct control of one samural at a time, and the Al will assist in commanding the others mostly. "There's a berserker character." Haas says, "and if he gets into a fight. and you don't have a character with the right charisma, you may lose control of him. You actually have to become him to babysit him, because he'll go off and start doing overly aggressive things you

might not want him to do."

characters, and they'll be more effective." While the player will control all four

Although calling the right play will enable players to neatly dispatch hordes of enemies, the enemies will be endowed with some strategies of their own. Haas explains that low-level undead soldiers may not be motivated to attack you, but their superiors will motivate them. "Their commanders are there telling them how to attack," Haas says, "and which formation to be in. Sometimes, if they're by themselves, they'll fall asleep, and you can sneak up



Click le using e motion bi rts sames to keen the characters a



Despite the feudel-era setting of Click's game, the teem of nine has taken an urban '80s approach to its photo. That's Heee getting eir

on them and kill them, it's not like Diablo. where there's guys just hanging out in the dark waiting to kill you."

Like Diablo, Throne will use spritebased characters, but 3D-accelerated graphics will be used for lighting and transparency effects. "We went from Diablo to Diablo 2," explains Gartner, "We saw the pre-production, got to weigh the benefits, and [were] part of the decision

to keep that game sonte-based." Gartner has written the 16-bit graphic engine for Throne of Darkness. and daims the conscious decision to go with sprites has enabled the team to put plenty more enemies onscreen without a framerate hit. "I suspect that our next game will be 100% 3D-accelerated," he continues. "but to get this kind of look.

we felt it would be better pre-rendered." Currently the gameplay is still very early - so early that Click is just finishing up its level-design tool. A unique multiplayer aspect is also in the works, which is tied to the single-player game, but that's being kept under wraps as well. Yet even in this flertgling. development stage. Click's tangible assets, including a few demo levels, are as enticing as the lore they draw from. Given the team's proven track record with isometric action-RPGs, we expect great things from Click; we just hope they can improve on the most irritating aspect of Diablo - the late









er offers more of that erterial enray effect



NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES

If you think you know all about EA's gift to car nuts everywhere because it's already out on PlayStation, the PC version will make you look again





Run from the cops, or chase down speed freeks, it's ell up to you

Pursuit came out for PlayStation. and it made an immediate impact. The series had always had its fans, but it had just as many detractors. Hot Pursuit silenced the navsayers, it was, in a word, the kind of game the series always. should have been. Not only was it packed with dream cars, it was fast, responsive, and - best of all - let you outrun the police. The PC version followed several months later, but rather than being a simple port, it was its own animal attorether with additional multiplayer options, 3D accelerator

ast year, Need for Speed: Hot



support, and a phenomenal attention to detail. In short, it took an already good game and made it great.

A year later, the PlayStation version of the sequel, High Stakes, didn't disappoint (see review on p. 91), but the PC version, even at the alpha stage of its development, looks like it will again surpass its console cousin. For example,



PC version will include not only the ten tracks found in the PlayStation version. but also all eight tracks from the previous game. Hot Pursuit

The simple truth is that the only thing both versions share is the 3D models used for the cars and environments. Everything else, including the game engine, is completely different - and in fact, even the models differ in significant. ways One of High Stakes' Improvements over Hot Pursuit is that the cars can take damage. In the PlayStation version, this was represented by swapping texture

PUBLISHER **Electronic Arts** DEVELOPER Electronic Arts DELEASE DATE

July 1999 ORIGIN

FORMAT



Reces end cheses can take piece in either the dey or night, end under sevaral different weether conditions, including rain end fog









You can expect all the isual visual bells and whistles we've come to expect from a 3Daccelerated game, plus maybe a few surprises

maps to give the car a "damaged" look, but for the PC version, the geometry of the car itself will change. Damage will even be location-specific; if a cop rams you from behind, the back end of your car will be crushed; scrape a guardrait. and the front-quarter panel will crumple.

dashboard, special effects such as environment mapping, and 3D accelerator support (although exactly which features of next generation cards - bump mapping, texture compression. being "explored"). The All for pursuing police cars is also much more sophisticated, and when playing as the but also direct all the other cruisers involved in the chase and be able to switch between them at will. However what really sets the PC version apart is the continued product support that players can expect from EA. As with Hot tracks, will be downloadable from EA's web site -- not to mention the dozen or so unofficial fan sites dedicated to

making new cars and tracks. This is somewhat paradoxical. however, because High Stakes will not include Internet support when it ships. Presumably, a parch or update will be





e of the hallmarks of the series is that it's a car nut's dre High Stakes is no exception, boasting 19 very, very high-end cars

available shortly afterward, but it seems like a major omission. Further, no decision has been made yet on how to handle a PC version of the High Stakes "pink slip" race - on PlayStation, two players could load up their favorite cars. and the loser would have the car erased permanently from their memory card, PC

As with Hot Pursuit, additional cars, and perhaps even tracks, will be downloadable from Electronic Arts' web site

owners would, no doubt, get quite upset at a program that erased a portion of their hard drive, and it's also all too easy to simply copy a file somewhere safe before the race.

Still, despite these (admittedly not inconsequential) question marks. Need for Speed: High Stakes would have to stumble very badly indeed to be anything less than enjoyable, given the acclaim and popularity of its predecessor. With its 19 high-performance cars, tournament mode, and the sheer thrill of the chase, all indicators point to a winner,









Great Fighters are Made not Born

The wait is almost over-figure Maker is coming | 500 pay on can get you hands on the most complied flowing flagment were one or two plays 500 pays on grant and one of two complied flowing flagment was a flagment of the complied flagment flagment



fighting machine, save your

cludes 20 fighters ready for combat in 10 exotic locations





Edit or use any of 800 moves, throws, and juggle combos, or invent something new



Test mode fine tunes you moves for maximum damag



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"...a landmarktitle in the console market."
-Next Generation









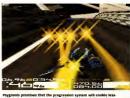
Psygnosis' signature series keeps right on going, looking better and getting faster



As we've come to expect from the Wigeout series, the soundtreck will be emong the geme's most eppeeling features

he original Wipeout was one of the games that helped put PlayStation on the map, and its immediate sequel. Wipeout XI., made PlayStation jump up and dance better than any racer up until Gran Turismo, Wipeout 3 won't exactly break any new ground for the series, but it makes enough of a departure from previous games to keep things moving.

To begin with, while all previous Wipeout games have featured only those trademark, wedze-shaped vehicles. Wipeout 3 will include three new car designs, each of which will have its own tradeoffs of speed, maneuverability, acceleration, and armor, Five of XL's weapons have been retained with seven new ones on the way (none of which will be as powerful as those in Wipeout 64, a bad deagn decision that threw game balance out of kilter, especially during multiplayer modes). The eight track



Psygnosis promises thet the progression system will enable less-skilled piegers to edvence while still providing e chellenge for more experienced pleyers

designs, however, are all new, and once again U.K. visual-design firm Designers Republic is providing billboards and some track structures in addition to all the team logos and icons

Most important, however, is that the engine has been further tuned to run at even higher frame rates than in XL, despite moving up to a high-res display. Also, for the first time, a Wipeout title will include

While previous games have featured only the trademark wedge-shaped vehicles, Wipeout 3 will include three new car designs

dual-shock and analog-control support, offering a finer level of control than the series has had before. And you'll need it too, since although you can still slide along walls as in XI. (as opposed to coming to an almost-dead stop in the original), the amount of damage you take is cumulative as long as you remain in contact with a surface - in other words, you can blow yourself up just by being a lousy driver. Rounding out the package are the usual multiplayer modes: tournament, challenge, and deathmatch.

Looking better than ever, and playing faster than ever, Wipeout 3 may have a familiar look, but if the tracks are tuned correctly and the new weapons balanced. there's little doubt it will be the best Wipeout yet.





the pece is considerab

FORMAT PlayStation PUBLISHER Psygnosis DEVELOPER Psygnosis RELEASE DATE November 1999

U.K.

ARMY MEN: SARGE'S HEROES

Fresh from its success with BattleTanx, 3DO refocuses its sights on N64 with a new twist on a proven franchise







atisfying than mowing own a cadre of those ten rmy fascists

FORMAT Nintendo 64 PUBLISHER The 3DO Company DEVELOPER The 3DO Company RELEASE DATE Fall 1999

ORIGIN

I he Poar's title green men from the filler place is the green of the filler place of use of the filler place of the folia at 300 did a patent search be find cut who owned the name "Army Men" for interactive media. Faster than you could see "Other places" of the place of the pl

based as missions on the Army Men PC products. Creative Protects Michael Mencherini fleed designer on Bastierland, emphasizes that Sarge's Nervice is a department from this Mencherinis generative from the Mencherinis generative contented accordiovations in the Army Mens series, combining Marro-esquar Associate relements with Octobing-level mission-based design, but don't expect to see any arimstitute puttients in puttient granual in overalls with Solvet ferriner faralles.

Players will freely explore large 3D environments with a personality-packed main character, squaring off against enermes with a classic military arsenal 3DO also promises that each campaign



Spiking a mission-based shooter with exploratory edventure elective developers hope to set Sarga apart from the pack

level will be packed with tons of secret areas and power-ups for the adventurous gamer,

Mendheim's team is doing a great job of expanding the Army Men universe by introducing a number of new characters and integrating the story into the gameplay. As Sarge, you must thwart the world-domination plans of Plastro



Teking advantaga of tha mamory Expansion Pak, the game will support multiple rasolutions end e letterboxad mode that will give players a wider field of view







Wa're aspacially partial to the missions that happen in our world -- now we went e Micro Mechines crossover gen

(think Fidel), the leader of the tan army. By using portals to go back and forth between worlds, Plastro brings weapons of mass destruction from our world to that of the Army Men in order to carry out his diabolical plan. A magnifying glass becomes a malicious ray of incinerating light; an M-80 becomes a razing, largescale explosive; and a garbage disposal becomes a soldier-devouring menace. To make matters worse, Plastro has captured your squad, Team Bravo, and you must rescue them one at a time, as well as your love interest, Nikki, who also happens to be your Colonel's daughter.

When a member of the squad is rescued, that soldier's special weapon is added to Sarge's arsenal. The list of weapons and items Sarge can accumulate currently includes the following: M-16, M-60, sniper rifle with scope, TNT, landmines, landmine sweeper, grenades, grenade launcher, flamethrower, mortar, shotgun, and C-4

explosives. Once a weapon is deployed, a unique animation ensues that includes the classic Army Men poses made popular by the original plastic toys. One of the more impressive examples Next Generation saw: Sarge's head slightly recoils as he pulls a grenade pin with his teeth, then lobs it skyward. Using an interpolation engine, these animations are seamlessly integrated into the ingame action without the tell-tale "pop" in motion. "We're putting our chips on the animation," said a proud Mendheim, who showed NG some of the more than 150 hand-drawn animated sequences, Manual animating techniques are a surprising choice in an industry infatuated with motion-capture. But in early tests, when 300 coupled mo-cap with the specular highlighting technique that makes all of the characters in the game look shiny and plastic. "It just looked scarv-kind of surreal," says Mendheim.

Half of the 14 missions in Sarge's Heroes are with everything sized to scale. The other half of the missions take place in our world, where Sarge and his ilk are the size of little, well, plastic army men as they storm gigantic kitchens, bathrooms, and backvards, Harnessing the critically acclaimed technology from BattleTanx, the multiplayer section of Sarze's Heroes looks to be shaping up quite nicely with team play, deathmatch, and capture the flag modes.

All things considered, the development of Sarge's Heroes is pretty far along for a fall release date. If development of the game continues on its current path, not only will it be the best game in the Army Men franchise, but it just might earn its stripes in a category currently dominated by GoldenEve.











ps from one playar gemes, and meps thet are unique to n

SLED STORM

Is there more to life than the need for speed?



hile Snocross snowmobile racing isn't the most high-profile event at the X Games, EA is convinced that the intense feeling of high-speed snowmobiling is at least a starting point for a racing game. Producer Jules Burt says the project wasn't ever intended to be a simulator, but an edgy and exciting product. "[Snocross] is a little mundane in real life, but we've taken it over the



top," says Burt To add this extra excitement to the title. EA has enhanced the demi-sport with quite a few aerial tricks from other racing events like motocross and BMX. The result is an adrenaline-inducing mix of Jet Moto-like intensity and tight control, which, although unrealistic, never defies reality to the point where the gamer can't believe that it can be done in real life.



There are a total of 12 different tracks, all of which can be flipped and played in night mode (complete with colored lighting effects from each racer's headlights). There are also a wide variety of racers, each with unique personalities and taunts as well as defining characteristics that rate their performance in areas such as top speed. handling, stability, and attitude (which

ne at night provides a new outlook on the same tracks for even more replayability













complex and most important facet of Sied Storm's action. It's very important that the game not only faal vary fast, but that players always be just on the

FORMAT PlayStation PUBLISHER Electronic Arts DEVELOPER EA Canada

to help you pull ahead of the pack — If you are willing to risk it



player soft-screen mode, which the team assured us will stay fairly close to 30fcs. Coupled with solid design, this feature should enhance replayability. Still several months from release, the team has plenty of time to polish Sied Storm until it shines. Should EA Canada meet its goals, this will be another winning addition to the global publisher's

lineup of franchises.

RELEASE DATE Late summer ORIGIN

BLOOD OF THE SACRED, BLOOD OF THE DAMNED

One of adventure gaming's most beloved heroes has a whole new look - again



For the third time, Gabriel Knight solves a supernatural mystery as his fams have come to expect, uncovers his own past as well





y and detail

FORMAT

Sierra

Sierra

PUBLISHER

DEVELOPER

Fall 1999

RELEASE DATE

Ithough it's never had the nhenomenal sales of a Quake or a Command & Conquer, few series have received as many accolades, or generated as fiercely loyal a following, as Jane Jensen's Gabriel Knight, Now the sometimes-cocky occult investigator and his partner, Grace Nakimura, are set to star in their third graphic adventure.

As with many other series, Gabriel

Knight has seen its share of changes. The original game, Sins of the Fathers, released in 1993, used 256-color bitmapped graphics. The sequel, The Reast Within moved to EMV in 1995, and this third installment will move Gabriel into a fully 3D environment, So, will the series ever settle into a graphic style? "Only if the industry ever 'settles into a style!" Jensen jokes. "We have to stay not only current, but ahead of the technological curve. This is why the graphic style keeps changing."

The game is set in Rennes-le-Chateau, a very real village in France. featuring a mystery inspired by events earlier this century involving ancient parchments with coded messages, the priest who found them, hidden treasure, and even the possibility of blackmail against the Vatican, And, because this is a Gabriel Knight adventure, the game gets its start when an infant is kidnapped by a sect of vampires.

As always with the series, players will be uncovering as much about Gabriel's past and mysterious lineage as anything else. "Just as the werewolf theme fit in with GKII in terms of reflecting Gabriel's own Internal struggle with hedonism, the vampires in GKM mesh well with the main subject matter - Rennes-le-Chateau," says Jensen, "The Rennes-le-Chateau story and to some extent the subplot involving Gabriel's personal development, is tied in with the idea of bloodlines - families*

Some felt the move to FMV deprived the character of some of his cocky appeal. With the move to 3D, however, Gabriel is once again being voiced by Tim Curry, "I do think that the Gabriel in GKW has a bit more of the GK/ feel to him." Jensen explains. "Dean Erickson. who played him in Beast Within played him more seriously, which was in part the script, but also the fact that just being in video meant the dialogue, etc., had a more realistic feel. With a more animated look, the characters can be nloved broader

Whatever form the hero takes, it's almost a sure bet that Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned will satisfy Gabriel Knight's legions of fans.









FOR NINTENDO 64

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0-60 (off a skyscraper)? Yes.

Rocers, stort your mayhem. Grab hald af ane af 10 wild vehicles and roce through the windy streets of Chicogo, where you'll hove to deal with tough oppanents, alleyways, drawbridges, newspoper rocks, tonnels, and the palice. Thraw in five roce modes and over 50 city landmarks, and there are plenty of sights to see. Just don't drive like a tourist.









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MILESTONES

Next Generation's monthly update on tomorrow's games

rash, Spyro, Jill Valentine. More than just names, they carry the same deeper sense of character instilled in names like Daffy, Pluto, and er... Homer. And now we find ourselves standing

among the crowded aisles at E3, where Crash, Spyro, and Jill Valentine will reveal where, when, and how they plan to reappear. Not going to E3? We've got you covered - read about them here

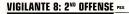
RESIDENT EVIL: NEMESIS PlayStation



















follows retired S.T.A.R.S. officer Jill Velentine es she leeves Recco City. Unfortunetely for her, it's e little too lete, as the zombles ere redy crawling through town. This one should be reedy this yeer

The kings of cer combet, Luxoflux, will bring to this sequel better graphics, new vehicles, new weepons, end en expended quest mode

XENA: WARRIOR PRINCESS PlayStation









SOLDIER OF FORTUNE



DEMOLITION RACER PlayStation











SPYRO 2 PlayStation



CRASH TEAM RACING PlayStartion











AIRONAUTS PlayStation







CROC 2 PlayStation









MIOTOWN MAONESS *







TONY HAWK

BATTLE ZONE 64

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PlayStation 2

Next Generation cuts through the hype surrounding Sony's and Sega's new systems

This piece don't look good for Segul, Sony has dominist market and mid share, and it's just announced a recolationary system that should blow protected out of the water when it's instead next protected out of the water when it's instead next specified as Sony HQ in Tolyon just before the Pullysiastion 2 demn, running quickly specified that segal might be ready to throw in the towel for Segris outpasted on they have share seen or conjusted market with barries stokes or on page 800, Some punish conformation of with the series stokes or on page 800, Some punish conformation of the series of the serie

in early 1989, Segai's Master System had, functionally, zero marker share and zero name recognition. Nitrodo owned the videogame business. One year later, Sega had leap-frogged MES and was well on 15k way to console dominance. a fact which even the release of Nitredo's technologically superior. Super NES couldn't change, (Nitredo eventually won the 16-bit race, but only because it kept supporting

Super NES long after Sega had abandoned Genesis.) This Int'l 1989, and the difference between Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 will likely be much greater than the difference between Genesis and Super NES, but it's important to remember that Sega has found itself in worse positions.

At the same time, it seems that anyone who doesn't think Dreamcast will fail is just as sure PlayStation 2 will never launch, or that if it does, there will be no games to play on it,

With so much uncortainty about both systems, it's time for some answers. In the following pages, Next Generation presents a detailed — and hype-free — examination of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats stood by Dreamosals and PlayStation 2, along with a brief bottom-line analysis of each system.

Our coverage of the next-generation system wars will continue next month, with a full report from the front lines at E3.



Dreamcast

Until Sony announced PlayStation 2 on March 2, 1999, Sega had the next generation to itself. Now, can Sega still compete?

With the PlayStation 2 announcement, and poor initial sales in Japan, the honeymoon is clearly over for Sega's macti-generation machine. Anyone expecting Sega to go quietly into the night, however, is clearly waiting in vain. The company has learned from its mistakes with previous

hardware, is committed to spending Stoo million in 1999 to launch the system in North America, and sincerely believes that it has a better-than-fighting chance to unseat Sony as the dominant player in the market, despite PlayStation 2.

Strengths

So ega's biggest strength is the actual existence of its system. While PlayStation 2 is currently specs and prototype hardware — impressive specs and prototype hordware, admittedly — Dreamcast is real and ready for its U.S. launch. And thanks to some traightedness on the part of Sego of America, the system should have one of the best launch libraries in history.

While the Japanese launch was characterized by a lack of quality software, the 10-month delay before the North American launch has ensured that a high-

quality batch of legeneroe and American first, and hard party genes will be available — there will be no harmitating delays of key tittles in the U.S as there were in span. Except on fewer than four AAA sittles at learned, bolstered by 9 to 12 supporting tittles, with other AAA and supporting sittles standages by related between the launch and the end of Segar's facial year in March 2000, when the last sight of spans facial year in March 2000, when the last sight of spans is barnet but when the standard of the standard of the Notice of the standard of the standard of the Notice of the Section of the Section of the Section of the Notice of the Section of the Section of the section of the section of the Notice of the Section of the s

PlayStation 2

Sony stunned the world with its PlayStation 2 announcement, but can it deliver games — and hardware — on time?

Dreamcast most infuriate PlayStation creator Ken Kutangi. Not because the system outpress PlayStation, but because it has sectived so much bype and yet is so conventional, unlike Nutaragis' revolutionary femotion lengths of the Notation of the State of the State of PlayStation 2, 11% early to Mellert that the Showing of PlayStation 2 technology in Match was done as soon as possible after Kutaragi — who first mentioned his goal of creating a system that could "synthesize emotions." to Marci Generation in Tolyon in 1996 — had working silicon. Given its designer, NG expected nothing less than greatness for PlayStation 2, and we were! disappointed. But specs don't guarantee success. How will PlayStation of Fert Read on.

Strengths

It is not at all in oversatement to say mut an important processing states of the most st

microprocessor. The specs that Sony announced in March are better in many ways than graphic workstations costing \$10,000 or more. Behind physics applications like modeling

nuclear explosions and weather systems and after certain missive military and logistical databases, realtime 30 games are quite simply some of the most demanding computer applications on the planet. That Sorry is planning to other a system that should actually outpace the desires of almost all developers for the next 24 to 48 months is nothing.











From Virtua Fighter to Grandia, Sega has already demonstrated that it can ship high-quality titles for Dreamcast. But is that enough:

games that demonstrate as dramatic a leap beyond the current generation as *Toshinden* on PlayStation did, there won't be many complaining about a lack of quality titles either.

The price, at \$199, is also going to be right at the same kind of mass-market support that Sony sees at \$129 (which will surely drop to \$99 when Dreamcast launches), it should prove a low barrier to entry for the hardcore gamers Sega needs to woo to succeed.

To achieve that price, sega has taken some criticism for using conventional hardware. Still, the decision has made Dreamcast the easiest consoledovelopment target over. Sure, that will result in a lot of questionable PC ports, but it also means that thirdparty support will be strong, and if PlayStation's success has shown anything, it's that having lots of titles is at least as important as having good ones. It's so easy to develop for, in fact, that many developers

titles is at least as important as having good ones. It's so easy to develop for, in fact, that many developers we've spoken to (who'd) just as soon move straight to PlayStation 2 view not developing for Dreamcast as leaving money on the table and plan to support the system regardless.

The bottom line is that Dreamcast is an excellent console, capable of playing games far more advanced than any console available today. There are already great games available on the system, and more are coming.

short of amazing. Sony's greatest strength in the next generation is clearly PlayStation 2's pure 3Dgraphics-processing power.

But that's only the machine. Sony has one of the most respected brand names on the planet. In the videogame area, PlayStatio is quickly approaching Nintendo in name recognition among non-players, and Sony's videogame-marketing efforts worldwide have yet to miss the mark.

In software, Sony has a respectable first party decimination of the target platform of choice for nearly event third-party console developer not partially owned by Sega or Nintendo. Given the strength of PlayStation 2, It's hard to Imagine those third-party relationships—especially with top publishers like EA, Square, and Namoc—weakening anytime Sonetine anytime solu-

in fact, it's doubtful Sony will need to do any evangelism for PlayStation 2 at all; it's much more likely that Sony's hird-party division will spend the next couple of years simply figuring out how to alocate a limited number of development systems.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, more than simply making current types of games that look better (although that will certainly happen). PlayStation 2 is powerful enough to enable entirely





These shots of the development board, with its dual fans and large heat slaks over the EE and GS processors, give some idea of what the final board may look like

new paradigms of gameplay. Just as 16-bit sidescrollers gave way to today's console mainstay, third-person platformers, the advent of PlayStation 2 is likely to where in totally novel gameplay mechanisms.

reamcast is certainly not without weaknesses, however The biggest, of course, is that even if Sony only delivers a system half as good as it's promising, it will still be five times better than Sega's machine. Dreamcast is an evolutionary system: PlayStation 2 is a revolutionary one. If and when developers truly learn to take advantage of PlayStation 2's capabilities, Dreamcast games will surely suffer qualitatively in comparison.

Sega also has serious branding problems. Saturn

didn't earn the company any trust among consumers and even the company's 16-bit glory days seem tarnished when one recalls the dismal 32X and Sega CD. While the company has a well deserved reputation in Japanese arcades, for the bulk of U.S. consumers Yu Suzuki and Tetsuya Mizuguchi are not household names. Dreamcast will not sell many units based on the Sega name, and - especially to those consumers with 32Xs, Sega CDs, and Saturns in the closet - it will need to appeal despite the name,

Key Dreamcast launch titles

Shenmue



NFL Football



NBA Basketball



Weaknesses

espite its strengths, PlayStation 2 is by no means invincible. As we reported last month, the Emotion Engine CPU, which will be manufactured by Toshiba, uses notoriously difficult .18 micron manufacturing processers (like from .25 to .18) can delay a project for months, and the Emotion Engine will be first attempt by Sony or Toshiba at .18 micron technology. It will also be produced at a new plant (with, at start-up, a theoretical maximum of only

about 400,000 EE chips per month), by a new jointventure corporation. Will chips be so scarce as to delay the launch? Sony certainly hopes not, but the available facts so far are not confidence building, to Ironically, PlayStation 2 may be too powerful for

some developers. Unlike the easy-to-develop-for PlayStation (or Dreamcast), PlayStation 2 has, on the CPU, enough multiple-data paths and co-processors to confuse many developers. The solution, using









More worryingly, there seems to be no sure-fire killer app for Dreamcast. There should be great fighting games and great football games, but after years of derivative work like Sonic Blast and Sonic R. Sega's once-great mascot, alas, is not the hedgehog he used to be; the company has no Mario or Zeida to clinch sales. Sony took its time creating its franchise character, Crash, but the one thing Sega doesn't have right now is time. While Sega is holding out great hope for Yu Suzuki's brilliant-looking Shenmue, its success is by no means guaranteed. in the end. Seea may not need a single killer app to succeed, but the lack of one to point to is a problem

Finally, while EA may no longer wield quite as much power as it did in the 16-bit days, there are a significant number of people who simply ain't gonna buy a system unless it has Madden on it. Our advice to Sega: deal.

Sonic Adventure



is buggy as helf. Sega needs to give its flagship mascot title some serious wor the day of the U.S. launch

Power Stone



but that isn't a reflection of qu ere's any justice, it will hit big in the U.S

perceived distance between it and Dreamcast

Finally, another problem may be a glutted

marketplace: because PlayStation 2 is backward

compatible, it will be tougher for new software to

stand out. Publishers may have the Next Great Thing

but competing with 200 \$10 CDs in the used bin may

make the (relatively empty) pastures of Dreamcast look a little greener. This won't hurt franchises like Game Day or Final Fantasy, but it may make it more

difficult for new titles to find their niche.

Soul Calibur



to Soul Blade is excellent in its own ri expect from Dreamcast Tekken

"middleware" APIs and tool-sets, may make programming easier, but at the cost of masking some of PlayStation 2's abilities. Although the conventional wisdom ("only three or four developers will really be able to program PlayStation 2 well") is probably an exaggeration (especially since we've yet to find a developer that doesn't count their team as one of devilishly hard to develop for, especially in the first generation of software, which may lessen the







Opportunities

By ega has a number of opportunities to exploit with Dreamcast: a provide new potential user base that docen't remember 20X; the possibility that the addition of a modern will prove unbelievably entions; the chance to court young, innovative developers with the system's seas of developerment, and more.

But all other opportunities pale note to the year-long window segs will have between the baunch of Decembers all orthe Architecture PRIJSSBIOD 2: For the next year, segs has the high end of the market to tosted; frow well it exploses the opportunity in the U.S. will determine the late of the system and very possibly the fait of Segs as an independent company. It has one year to sallow a later of oftweer bitzmy, baid brand keysilty, and harmess economics of scale so as to undercut Psystation 2's price as steeply so possible note fall.

At retail — and in the hearts and minds of Sego's initial target audience, hardcore gamelypers — a year, forever, in one year, Sego aderbroned Mintendo, in less than a year, Sony destroyed Sego, in a year, Sego is hoping to be so entrenched that, superior system or no, Sony will focus on upfull battle with PhyStation 2 through Christmas 2001 at the very least.

Can Sega do it? It's certainty possible, for the next year, it's important to remember that Sega's competition won't be Playstation 2, but the already-long-in-the-tooth Playstation and Nintendo 64. Will Sega do it? If it hopes to survive, it has to.

Opportunities

The 13 law year. Shop variousless assessed to Mrs. Secretarian with the Secretarian Secretarian Conference and the Secretarian Secretaria Secr

don't think that Sony's long term business plan calls for anything else. It has been on the losing side of a standards war before (with Betarnax), and It wants to win the next one. The inclusion of such features as FireWire, USB, and PCMCIA slots also flints that Sony has big plans for the system.

It's less liefly but there is a reak opportunity for and foolible to period with the most interpret chip into a serious threat to meter a menufacturers? COM Degenera, Allondy the ET that shall be serious threat to meter a serious threat to meter a serious threat to mean and the serious coupling the ET has fairly domain integer performence, its faculting point capabilities are such that an "open" Physiotenia 7 could be a read challenger in the workstation market, in fact, 2% runnoved that one middlewever maker has ported its high-ener 30 animation surfer to Physiotical 2 and seen a sk improvement in speed.



The soul of the new machine: Sony's PlayStation 2 Emotion Engine chip unmasked

What about Nintendo?

As it did in the 32-bit wars, Nintendo seems content to let Sony and Sega fight it out before it introduces its next-generation system. There are some key differences this time around, however, which should keep both Sega and Sony looking over their shoulders:

First, white development of Nintendo's next system is already undurway at Artit, this time Nintendo has the benefit of seeing exactly what it is competitors with deliver early enough to make changes to the hardware. Expect Nintendo to Learn from its mistakes on Nintendo 64, which had greet special effects but a dismal polygon count and was almost impossible to develon for.

Second, Nintendo is finally jettisoning the moribund cartridge format for a custom DVD-based

Finally, while Nintendo is known for supporting its systems long after its competitors have abandoned theirs (same counselors will still answer questions about NES titles. and the company is still actively marketing Super NES at mass-market retail outlets), development is already underway on nextgeneration titles in Kyoto, and, if the job ads at GDC are any indication, Iguana offshoot Retro Games is

already starting development for the new system. Deakey Kong expert Reze will supply the key intits party software in Nintendo 64's decilining system, ensuring a steady flow of income as the wizards in Kyoto work on the next speneration of Morle (which Migamoto recently said woold be "radically different" from Morlo 64).

The bottom line?

Mintendo is likely to be a much stronger contender in the next generation than it was in the last, and it will be impossible to call a definitive winner in the next-generation race until after Nintendo launches its next system, expected in the U.S. in fall 2001.

Rumor Watch

terribly in Japan
Reallity: True: although it had a strong
launch, Dreamcast is now rootlinely serisold each week by Nintendo 64. However,
it's important to remember that these are
huge spikes in bandware sales when new
software is released, and the U.S. should

Rement Sega is planning a hard drine, 719 drive, and pulste add on for Dreamcast Basility: in Japan, where PC personalist ist homes is dimost disc ecopsishes (Sega and Soys included) are positioning thair consolius as harder in Allity to perform PC-life inactions. Sega, in publically, has shown a clutter trabaring as sumbor of PC and dons for Dreamcast. Dort Japanett Lose must be yound (passable) a laphound rates with in the U.S. (passable) a laphound rates with in the U.S.

le/half-PCs, like the CD-I, have

ways fared poorly here

Threats

Infortunately for Sega, Sony and Nintendo duck and standing on the sidelines as it attempts a cometoxic. The two companies will spend the next year releasing what should be some of the best games yet on their respective platforms, and insvitable hardwire price cuts will help reduce the impact of Sega's price point.

the impact of sages sprice point; contents to concentral end the largest of self-his in the huge actingation for Physicians 2 among development, and the Physicians 2 among development, who are more to anything but the latest and grantest system. In fact, many carleady shrings where more presention project focus to Physicians 2. If slegs is to succeed, selfreads development withing on theramount, not "Physicians 2. Maxing sure third parties do not jump ship with to ampor challenge in the nort year." That some airclaightenia among chrosiumsyou." The some airclaightenia among chrosiumsyou." The some airclaightenia among chrosiumsyou." The some airclaightenia among chrosiumspoint that some airclaightenia among chrosiumsport that some airclaightenia among chrosiumsyou." The some airclaightenia among chrosiumsport that some airclaightenia among chrosiumstenia." If the poor sales in Asia don't improve, expect to see the support of key Jipannese third parties like Capcom and Namco waver. while Nintendo has proven that failure in Japan doesn't necessarily men a US. Isunch is doomed, Sega is far more reliant than Nintendo on the support of fickle third parties to ensure success.

In short, while all the threats to Dreamcast can be managed, it is foolish to think that Sega has anything close to an easy year ahead of it.

The hottom line

Despite Sonry's Flargistation: a announcement, and despite the last few group games that come for PlacyScation and Birthmode 6, for the next percentage size just be the place to play the most advanced games are a consist. Sepp has one year to turn that lead into a real critical mass: an installed base of more than a possion series by the time its competite laurches. If specia cards that, it has a very next chance of becoming a serious player in the next generation. If not, soon after PlacyStation: a strike placements will fill belowere a deem deleting the contractions.

Threats

The of Soury's biggest threats are internal.

First, Son's year's Sorging to New Jorn's Son's New Jorn's Son's New Jorn's New Jorn's

managed a console transition before. How hard can it be, especially if you're number one? Well, in the best-case scenario ever, hintendo's transition from 8- to 16-bit, the company lost half its market share, despite introducing a better machine then its competition, a situation reminiscent to the one today.

Only partially in Sony's control is the PluyStation 2 release dute. Every day Dreamcast is out and PluyStation 2 Sin't is another day for Segs to gain market share, and another day for Dreamcast to make the PluyStation brand look old. PlayStation is an amazingly hot brand right now, but that can charge quickly Gust ask Segal Consumers, especially traditional game consumers, are incredibly fickle; with one devastating ad, Sega could really hurt the equity of the PlayStation brand.

Dreamcast's head start also means that Psystation 25 first generation software will be competing with second- or third-generation Dreamcast software, which may again reduce the perceived difference in the quality of the two systems. Finally, if sony starts to change focus from

PayStation 2 as a game machine to PayStation 2 as a set top box; it will need to be very careful not to alienate the very people who will determine the late of PlayStation 2 games. Nothing will be PlayStation 2's cond factor fastor than even a hint that edutalizment may someday be released for it.

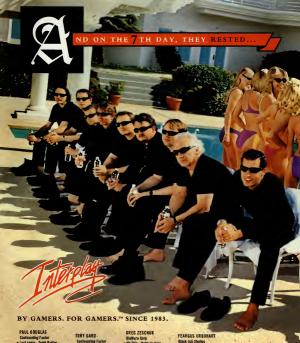
Rumor Watch

Remon: PlayStation a's poke point, will be too high—at least Sajon Reality: Stopy may underzinal Reality: Stopy may underzinal formation of the company on earths it samply will not bring PlayStation a to market unifiest; it can do it at a reasonable price point, even if that reasonable grice point, even if that means taking a loss on the hardowe. Dust expect PlayStation a to retail for more than 5999.

Rumer: PlayStation a can't succeed — Sony has no good finel-party developed Reality: When ne finish beard this, we wondered if we were in a time warp from 1995. Sony has a robust group of first-party dawelopers, from 989 Studies in the U.S. to exclusive teams like Polyphony in Japan.

The bottom line

While PlayStation 2 is an assaing piece of handware, handware is only past of the picture. With While PlayStation 2 is an assaing oil year's bed start in the U.S., Sony and find that of the Start by rough marketing challenge about. This said, Sony has yet to taly away from (or fail at) a FlayStation marketing challenge about. This said, Sony has yet all charge to take years of the Start by Startion and of the next decade, and has the PADD and marketing dollant to sprond to bely it get there. Bufferell, Reeds to rown that it can do more that it can do more that decade starting the Starting S



• Last gamo - Tomb Raider • Hext project - Galleon - Confounding Factor

• Last game - Tomb Raider • Next project - Galloon

• Nit Title - Baldur's Gate Next project - HDK 2

Black Islo Studies · Latest release - Fallout 2 . Next role - Planoscapo Torment RUSTY BUCHERT

DAVID PERRY : Shiny Entertainment, Inc. . Big Nit - Earthworm Jim - BRIAN CHRISTIAN · Upcoming release - Messiah 14° East Coming Soon

RAY MUZYKA BioWare Corp Nit Title - Baldur's Gate
 Noxt project - MDX 2

ALAN PAVLISH .. Tantrum • Next Tantrum releasé -Descent 3

. Last voyage - Star Trek: · Next game - It's Top-Secret. :)

. Star Trek - Starfleet Command Star Trek - Klingen Academy . Star Trek - New Worlds





State of the Dream

s the Dreamcast launch approaches, the software titles have already been released in Japan, and the U.S. picture looks even more hopeful. The bigger question has been just how Sess plans to get the machine into gamers' hands. The Sexa executive team responsible for the launch has solidified around President Bernie Stolar and Senior Vice Presidents Chris Gilbert (sales) and Peter Moore (marketing). Next Generation spoke with them at Sega's new San Francisco headquarters to get an update on the state of the Dreamcast launch, the software, the rumors, the marketing strategy, and the competition,

Next Generation Bernie, let's start by revisiting two questions you didn't answer the last time we spoke (NG 42). Last year you wouldn't reveal a price, but you did say that \$299 would be "too high." Care to be more specific? Bernie Stolar: Well, if I could bring it out at \$99, it would be great, but that's impossible. We're going to be very aggressive on price. I think you're going to see a price point right around \$199.

NG: And the release date? Bernie: September 9, 1999.

NG Will there be a modern included?

Bernie: A 56K modern will be available, but we're not making any announcements yet on whether it will be packed in the box or not.

PlayStation 2

NG: Excellent, Let's switch from Dreamcast for a second. What did you think of the PlayStation 2 announcement? Bernie I think their specs were impressive, but we're launching a system this year And in doing that, we believe the content we are going to deliver, from graphic quality to sameplay, is soing to be far superior than anything else. The bottom line is, it will all be available this year.

NG: What about next year? Bernie: Look, anyone who is developing for PlayStation 2, if

you look at the specs and what kind of time frame it will take to develop, the system just won't be able to produce anything of real quality until at least 2001. To get out next year, you would have to rush development, so I don't believe their content will be anywhere near the quality of what we're going to deliver

NG: Do you think SCEA will delay the launch? Is the fall 2000 date for the U.S. too ambitious?

Bernie: Sony is a manufacturing company, basically, and they do that really well. I think they'll have a really difficult time, but you just never know with them. Ultimately this is going to rely not so much on Sony right now, but on Toshiba. When you set out to build a chipset of those specs, you have to understand that the only people who have done that so far, the only people actually working at that level right now are IBM and Intel. Toshiba has never done that. Can Toshiba do this? That is really the question.

NG: Fair enough. Do you think Toshiba can do it? Romie I think it's a petionable

Rumors

NG: The Dreamcast launch has been beset by perhaps more rumors than any other hardware launch in history.

Bernie I think it's a combination, First, Dreamcast is launching in the height of the internet age, Back when we launched Saturn, the Internet was an exclusive community; now it is as widely used as TV and newspapers. Second is the fact that this is such a highly anticipated product. I think for the last year and a half, people have been so desperate for information about Dreamcast they did anything to get it, even if that meant making it up or printing rumors online that they heard. Regardless of all



"For the last year and a half, people have been so desperate for information about Dreamcast they did anything to get it, even if that meant making it up"

that, it adds up to tremendous buzz, which has helped get the word out to many different consumers and even media, who are calling Dreamcast the "product to watch in '99."

NG: Well, let's go through the list. First, Sega head Shoichiro trimpilin was snotted at Spry Computer Entertainment's Tokyo HQ the day before the show presumably getting a private demoof PlayStation 2. Is there anything we should read into this? Bernie. No. The group in Japan has a really good working relationship with the people at Sony, and there was a showing of the technology beforehand, sust as we showed them Dreamnost helpsphand

NG: Why? What's the rationale there?

Bernie: Why not? You're going to be delivering it anyway, and any engineer at the level we are talking about fully understands the technology and the specifications. At some point, it becomes no secret, particularly once you send out the tools When they did that, the tools were being shipped to several



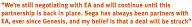
that we want to hill bedding up the launch of the product. Those have not changed all at Originate, we were going to amount of them at Tay Fat When Peter primed us too wasks bedone Tay Fair, we decoded that it was in our best arressed to delay those amount comments until our San Francisco Retail Summit in April. There was some thirming to happen from when we wanted to amountee at to fay fair, and we decoded it would be in our best interest to delay that So hist change of smeltans, think, helped to fuel some of those runners you were taking about.

Peter Moore Sent II had been orboard for a price of the prior to fault, to incrunice connecting a mapric as the basich, as a subset of something date, Toy Fair soems to be vestly inappropriate. So If think to be able to have our feetalises Summer before Eq. to bring proper into a pice that is purely focused on Sega Dreamces and the sales and merketing programs and to do it on our fair if sive y important. With our destructed to any discloses that may have been made prior my armal, 10y Fair dirth seem an appropriate place to do it, fairly

Marketing

Mick As most glock to Evennerat. We know the price are formed the mission designed and the mission of the miss

As we get to the launch date and obser to Christmas, we'll be looking for that second wave, if you will. You'll see broad based things. Our sports titles are excellent, so you'll see NFL and NBA advertising. Then as we go past Christmas into the fourth quarter of our fiscal year, you'll see us driving some



third-party developers. The word was already out within the Japanese community, so why not?

NG: A lot of first-party development in the LLS. has been started, but a lot has been stopped, too. The ratio of projects started versus projects getting killed seems very high. Are

developers having trouble?

Bernie: Over the years, when it comes to content, I have found the most important thing has been quality, and than's especially true now. Authenticity and realism in our titles is so important to our Dreamcast strategy that if we can't hit those impleastness early on, we're not going to release the game.

No But most games come together at the end of the project, and whe'n bearing of games being kilded that a few months, and whe'n bearing of games being kilded that a few months. Beamle: The gamesley comes together at the end, sure, but there are certain through that lead by our to believe therefore on high wait game work. If we can't see that early on, because of the colds right new of development—and stone colds are gatting higher and higher with every title—If a tarber still the other or stop the other and except a stopped to be then an earlier stage as opposed to better on.

NG in the days after Toy Fair, we got a huge number of calls from pools, all basically saying the same thing: "Steps canceled all these realiser meetings at Toy Fair, we're not sure what's going on with the Isunch." Comments?

Chris Gilbert: List me speak to what we wanted to accomplish there we have a number of plans and millestones.

software trites, because January and February are excellent especially on the new plotform — they're excellent times to drive software that we'll be launching. So there will be five distinctive phases; the first one being a cryptic phase, then a pre-launch a launch the holidars, and a post-launch.

NG Will the initial focus be on the hardware or software? Peter: Well, the first push has got to be to bring the hardware into existence for the consumer, but then it will be a very quick transition into software, because the software is going to drive, obviously, the sales. At first, you'll see the cryptic phase -- it will all be about Sessa Dreamcast itself - but then the launch titles will quickly follow. There is a very innovative way of how it will all blend. It's always been a problem, as evidenced by your question, that there always seems to be in the minds of the industry a sort of disconnect: "There is hardware, and then there is software." It's almost like they're church and state, and you've got to attack them differently, Well, we won't. We will blend the two together. Because of the capabilities of the hardware, it brings so much of the software to light, that you will see an execution that blends. I can't get too much into it without giving the game away, but ... NG OK, if you won't get into specifics, let's talk about goals.

What are the marketing and sales goals?

Peter. The goal of the marketing program is to have the launch period, that first few days, be the biggest isunch of a platform in videograming history, and it think we're well on the way to

Chris Gillbert: Let me speak to what we wanted to in videograming history and I think we're well on the way accomplish there we have a number of plans and milestones that. As Bemile said, we are first and foremost a gaming



company. Maybe our competition has different king learn strategies, but we are commetted to his game From the first wave on it will be about showing the capabilities of the hardware, but in any unique way, and card's gave you the detain. Surg in the cofliware and fying in the const hat our games are very families with from Segi Broads. From that sepect of it, a will be closely located on that first wave. As we get 1.5 million units, which we've commetted to gering by the end of the facial year, we will get that first wave of early adoption, and we'll have a very strong perseal program.

The Sales Forecasts

NG. One and a half million units sold through by the end of your fiscal year in March 2000, is that what you're shooting for? Peter: Cornect.

NG. Is the 1.5 million number a best-case scenarior?

Bernie We've gra to business plan that we're workner

bowed. Then number is involved in our business plan, and
we look at that die a number that's why published we
been that developed in conversations we have had
with our retailers. It's not just jouched out of the day, it's bod
into the pressile program and the solviner with they've seen
and what they leef, rather than what we field about what this
manafactance is caughed or publishing through

NG You mentioned the presale. Obviously, there have been some unofficial pressile programs going on right now at some of the retailers. When do you anticipate rolling out the official presale constant?

Prefere About 60 days prior to sunch, although that will go in phases, because as you say there are a number of retains asked yot that we notificial preside out there and famility, their estimates of what they're expecting to pressil are roughly about double now what they were se weeks ago. So despite the fact that there is not an official pressile program, the consumer demand to set on the mind slaunch list.

significantly stronger than they originally expected.

NG. Any chance there will a hardware shortage at launch? Bernie: "Ill areaver that question. Absolutely not.

NG. Overall, what is the sales picture like right know? To put it mildly. Sega didn't make tons of friends when it surpriselaunched Satum at just a few retailers. How long are retailer memories?

interiorisms. The section has been service, when it joined as morths for section has been service, see section, see a section, and a section against an analysis of the section of the se

NG: Going back to marketing for a bit, will the sales strategy include comparing Dreamcast to PlayStation and Nintendo 64? Peter: Not necessanly I think the consumer wants to see what Dreamcast is all about, not a comparison with other systems, because I think you're talking about two years different consumers. Sony and Nantendo are now in their thirdand fourth-year cycles of their platforms, and they're going after a very different consumer than we are. If we want to compare to them, it's very easy to do. Even the lavman can understand what a 128-bit system can do You just need to look at the content on the screen to draw the comparison, but I don't think that serves us well. We want to talk about our games on our hardware and really not confuse the issue with drawing direct comparisons, because that just turns into a pissing match a year later, and I really don't see the benefit to us in doing that.



"In the next year, you will see Sega take back marketshare from Nintendo and Sony, and you will see the company on the rise back to the number one position in the industry"



launch in the U.S. How will you compete with a system that is on paper clearly superior, technologically, to Dreamcast? Peter: Well, then we really start marketing! Bernie and myself were in a meeting in Tokyo on Saturday and saw an incredible lineup of software. Our biggest challenge now, I think, is just how we phase in all of this stuff. We saw so many quality titles that will be available to us down the stretch in 2000 It's just a question of phasing in these titles. By next year, we will have gotten our installed base. After we get that first 1 million to 1.5 million, then we want to lespiror to 2 to 3 million in the following year, and you do that with content. You've got to give the consumer a reason to buy the hardware, and the reason to buy the hardware is not the bits or the sound system, it's the content. I was very impressed with what I saw in Japan on Saturday in regard to content that's going to be available, both by SQI first party and Japanese third party, and the SQA first party development that we're working on, as well

The launch software

NG. The software picture is already more impressive than it was for Saga with Sauri, just in terms of what's available to take from Japan. Still, 1.5 million mosts in six moments is prothy ambibious; what do you see as the key leanch titles in the US that wall enable Saga to reach those goals?

Bernie: Wir in going to have basisethal and football, the day of

tract Mill ensure segue to reach mixes goals? Berniet: We're going to have basiethall and flootball, the day of the launch: That's really important. From a third-party standpoint, Midway will have, I think, an incredible boxing title as well as three other games, Acclaim will have their football same out as well.















Peter: Capcom with Power Stone.

Peter: Capcom with Power Stone.

Befferic Namon with Soil Califut, no Buil let me say these titles are anablable for the baunch. As Peter indicates, we've some a lot of sollware, and the lay for us is how we manage that blanny from September through December and göring through next year. It is less no ordinary in the film basiness, you missed to relate the last own common and the last several to relate the last own common and the last several to relate the last several to relate the last several to the day of the baunch. They file sound not through the view of the last several to the last several to

NG. One of the biggest titles being developed in the LLS right now is NR. Football [previewed on page 28, Sega is mexicing a huge amount of money in the signs, and the developer, Visual Concepts, well beyond the development budget of a typical game. What's the extensive theorem in Visual Concepts. I believe the high exist mension of command Was worsted Mark.

Bentie: The sheep been a grost believer in Vesal Concepts. I believe they're a well-imanged company. We wented from the start to really bring Seep Sports back. In order to do the, football became ampire respect of launching Seep Sports. If you look at us over the last flow years, we have not had a football game, particularly on Saturit, believe Brown what we've seep, the investment will come back terifold, and it will be one of the games that they Seep Sports buck, also.

NG. And so far the investment seems to be paying off, at least in the ore-release copies we've been looking at. But it leads to a larger question, NFI. Football has two or three times the animation data of today's football games. Are the next generation of systems. Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 and Nintendo's next system, going to require the kind of investment Sega is putting into NFI. Football in every game? Bernie. The authenticity and realism that can be brought to life right now in games is the most important thing. The artwork becomes really critical, and polygons become a conversation piece, but if you look at the same right now and at the motion-capture moves that are in that same, each player has well over 2,000 motion-capture moves. If you look at PlayStation or Nintendo, they only have 200. That's really important when you start taking about realism. We're delivering an almost TV-like realism. Every company will have to do it. The bar is set so high that Sons, when they talked about their next PlayStation, said they only thought that five companies would be able to develop for it.

The third-party picture

NG to far the third-party potture has been impressive most of the big ones have signed on. But not the biggess. Will you sign Bectronic Arts before the system launches? Bernie: We're still regioning with EA and will continue until this partnership is back in place sega has always better partners with EA, ever since Genesis, and my belief is that a rick with the study.

NG in time for them to step software at launch?

Bernie I don't beleve you'll see EA at the launch. They
weren't at the launch with PisipSoin, they weren't at the
launch with MisipSoin, they weren't at the
launch with MisipSoin Soin Soin Soin Soin
weren't even at the launch with 3DQ, and they owned 20% of
the company at that time.

NG What about some of the other third parties? Are most companies agreeing to do one title, or are most people signing on for a whole range? Bernier Every company is developing more than one title

Bennie Every company is developing more han one title, on the third-part side. You mentioned, like, four titles mid-Midway. I can tiell you the number of titles from Accidin, and I can tell you the number of titles from Namoc, Capcorn, and Historic, but it's up to those companies to release those title diests and how they want to manage their software libraries on their own. As partners, we're letting than speak to that first.

Shenmue

NG: At a recent private demo, along with Football, Shemmue

was shown as Sega's real killer app for Dreamcast. First, when's it coming?

Peter: Obviously, It's coming in August in Japan. But the localization is just so unbelievably complex, because these are all speaking characters, and the game isself is just so nich in depth of detail that it is going to take us a lot to localice.

NG: How tough will the marketing be? Except with very knowledgeable consumers, Yu Suzuki isn't really a household name in America.

Peter: I think the game will speak for itself it's just an absolutely beautiful production, and I say production. because you know, you have heard of the production costs. This is a 30 million-dollar development, and it really brings into perspective the capabilities of the hardware like no other title that will have preceded it. When I see the reaction. just as a neophyte in this industry, when I personally witness being shoved to the side as Suzuki-san made an appearance at Tokyo Game Show, and then just the oohs and ahhs of the details of the game ... Soga had playable demos at the Tokyo Game Show, and you just couldn't get near them. And there were plenty of galijin playing, as well as Japanese. The excitement that Shenmue will provide, I think, will amaze you. It's such a magnificent game that it's going to take a long time to localize, but it will be available in sometime between Christmas 1999 and Christmas 2000.

NG So learned for the least word, what's your prediction for where we'll see Segal in a year? In three years?

Bernie 'tou've seen the handware, five seen the filter, and I know the company's commitment to invastmant, in the need your, you will see Sega see lead for mitterfeare from Nivitation and Song, and you will see the company on the ricke book to the number one position in the industry, in three years? Well, I see Sega dominating the industry both with content in the more and outside the form.



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It's Time to Laugh!!

Tenchi in Tokyo

Tarchi linds binselt alone in the big city - Tokyof Thare, a beautisi and agrassiva girl from school will throw Tarchi's cerefully believed life into clases - with planty of help from the fire Jaalona allan girls atill living back at home in the country...



Battle Athletes Victory

Alteri wants to gradents the athlotic prop action and competitive the Casen Sectory (the latel little her men, the ment timens admitted and all timed "Barve"s jest a few problemes; the artiferented landstrap, her rivin's flusteles and extensional the re-lant, and Alteri case"t assets to write up for training! Walcome to the weekly wards of international athlotics - 30th Contary Style!



Ranma 1/2

The ellimate peopler beader county! A full lake a cared aprily in China means cold water changes augmenache Bame schome late agive With his date travillaginto a people and three merital-arti-sayy Sancais, you can had Rosmo's life ba't boring. Paintil moyos, hat avere bertagi



Magical Project S

Scooni has been choom to restore the believe of good is the entereal. Unfortunately, also can't decide which is more emberrealing - her tacky Continus or the exceedingly issue vitatus also meet flight against!



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FINALS

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ext Generation's reviews: We don't mince words, and if a game deserves a good kicking, we're ready to put on our steel-toed boots. If a game is great, we're equally willing to buy it a drink.

**** Revolutionary

Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high watermark.

A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

*** Good A solid and competitive example of an

established game style. ** Average Perhaps competent certainly uninspired.

Bad Crucially flawed in design or application.

Denotes a review of a Japanese product.































90	Starsiege The £arthsiege series lives on	PC

91	Need for Speed: High Stakes And the stakes are high indeed	PS
-	Hernes of Minht and Manic III	

	Bresthing life into	turn-based strateg	У
ex 3: 0	eep Cover Gecko	PlayStation	,

Legend of Legala	PlayStation	93

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Nintendo 64

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weatine	PC	ya

Requiem: Avenging Angel	PC	

The latest multiplayer, persistent online world

EVERQUEST

Publisher: 989 Studios Developen: Verant



nagical music

obody can deny that Ultima Online was a grand experiment. It proved that multiplayer online worlds could be done for the masses, and it. broadened the scope of what people thought could be done on the Internet. EverQuest has absorbed lessons learned from Ultima Online, and while the breadth of the game has been limited somewhat, the experience is altogether more exciting and accessible The most dramatic step Verant

has taken is the complete move to

3D. Everything in the world of Norrath is beautifully modeled and, with even a moderately powerful system, looks spectagular Awesome vistas and dark shrines lay hidden for the explorer to find. and each new discovery only makes you want to see more of this majestic world. And, unlike other goline RPGs, each section of the world has a unique set of creatures and races to make it stand out making traveling from one side of the world to other a much more interesting proposition. When played from the first-person view (third-person is also available), the game is the closest anyone has come to portraying a virtual world,

populated by people just fike us.



is here - so, is it the Ultima killer?

i classes are able to call upon tha mana of tha land to create cular spall effects — which are helped by 3D acceleration

With 12 different races and 14 character classes to choose from. you can customize your character to your liking. Once you're placed in your starting city (based on your race), you must fend for yourself The options available to you can be a bit overwhelming at first and unfortunately, while the manual covers the basics of the game, it's woefully incomplete when describing the different character classes, items, attributes, and miscellary. This tends to leave new

players adrift, forced to learn the

intricacies of the game through trial and error, it felt to us like a thinly disguised ploy to get players to buy the strategy guide, which was irritating, to say the least. Ultimately, it is the other

players online that give the game its life, and, as with other online games of the past, this is a mixed blessing. To progress in the game with your character, you must kill monsters to earn experience - standard RPG fare. In a nod to game balance. however, it actually becomes easier to progress in the high levels when you join with other players and play out your adventures as a member of a party. Later in the game, you will actually come in contact with players from entirely different sections of the game world: this hammers home just how great the scope of this title is It's actually possible, if just for a moment, to believe that you really are an

adventurer in a brave new world. Unfortunately, when you meet some cranky, foul-mouthed 13-yearold playing on his brother's account, it might cast a pall over your evening, but that's the price you pay to game with the masses Luckity.





r travels you will come across different races, human and non-human alike. If you band together with a group of like-mindad players, thera's nothing stopping you from trying to exterminate anything that moves



There ere hundreds of items that you will come ecross in you travais. Mix and match tham for maximum effectiveness

you cannot be killed by other players unless you deliberately select being vulnerable (enabling you to attack others as well). This not only gives the players that want to fight each other the luxury of doing so without bothering everybody else, but it also limits the more antisocial parts of society to bothering their own. This is a design choice that will be debated on Usenet until the end of time, but we feel that it is one of the most impressive new ideas in the game. Players will still have to deal with the occasional "d00d," but in our experience, most of the people you run across are going along with the fantasy, and at least trying to role play their character - some, of course, are simply more successful

Overall, there are so many details involved with this game that it is impossible to convey them in a single review. There are guids to join, social events to attend, and at one point we even witnessed a skeletal invasion of one of the

than others.







Cooperating with other players will anable you to take out much more powerful monsters then would be possible elone



Each cheracter class has e fighting style unique to itself. For instance, the monks use their edvenced mertiel erts to take care of any monsters they come across

future are staggering, and the design team seems committed to constantly exponding and improving the game world so it wort ever get off. EverQuest is one of the rare games that gives back increasingly as you play it, and at is the nevers high watermark by which all future persistent online worlds will be uideed.

major cities. The possibilities for the





In the higher lands, berberier must struggle against some of the more terrifying denize of Norreth





ins ere netural enemies in the world of Norratib, so you have to be careful not provoke any fights



The Cybrids of fan favorite Earthsiege are back with a vengeance, and you're in for a world of HERCs.



STARSIEGE his latest in the Earthsiege series is in an unenviable

Publisher: Sierre Studios Developen: Dynamix







after its five-star spin-off, Tribes. the original is already referred to as "the other Starsiege." The gameplay should be familiar not only to fans of the previous Earthsiege titles, but also

position. Released several weeks

to players of any similar senes. You pilot a massive, robot-like HERC through various missions (seek and destroy, protect a convoy, capture a ship, etc.). When you return after other goodles, or trade it in on a Earthsiege titles, you also choose wingmen to pilot additional HERCs One nice feature from the

previous game is notably lacking, however - the ability to priot a flying auxiliary vehicle. But this slight annoyance is more than mitigated by the wonderful addition of a second complete campaign. Once you've won the war for the humans, you can trade in your animal urges for the pure drives of digital efficiency and try again as a Cybrid.

Playing as one of Prometheus'



As the Cybrids approach for one last invasion, humanity lies its scattered forces finest is a treat - not only do you

get to sample a whole new range of vehicle chassis and weaponry. but you encounter some of the best characters in the game. Starslege provides a separate storyline for the Cybrid campaign with full narration and cut scenes. Although the two plots parallel, they only converge near the end, once the Cybrids have begun their rivasion of Earth itself. Their tactics aren't particularly pretty (they note, for example, that "research suggests that 85% of enemy forces will not fire if you strap a human child to your chassis"), but it's

always a kick to play the bad guy. Technologically speaking, Starsiege is extremely solid, with well-balanced play. The only flaw lies in the game's unimpressive Al - the enemies are fairly predictable, and your wingmen are a constant source of frustration. Although they're capable of following orders and good at ganging up on a target, they also have an inexplicable habit of launching themselves directly into your line of fire. There's nothing like opening up on an advancing Adjudicator only to see bits fly off your hest pilot's HERC as he dances happily through your field

of fire. Also, some of the "better" available weapons will never see use - their weight or power requirements make them impractical for even the most advanced HERCs you obtain. In the final analysis, though, Starsiege is a worthy successor to

the Earthsiege series and should be just as attractive to fans of Heavy Gear or Mechwarrior II. The missions are well-designed, the vehicles are highly customizable. the framing story is good, the voice acting is remarkably good, the soundtrack is so far beyond good that the word seems inadequate, and the gameplay is just plain fun, Once you've finished a few missions, you may even change your mind as to which game is "the other Starslege."



the solar system, you can go back and try your hand at



The classic cop-car chase game enters its fourth iteration with the same great gameplay and a lot of nifty new features



NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES

Publisher: Electronic Arts Developer: Electronic Arts







Interfaces that Invariably move too slowly

many modes of play, including a unique "pink slip" mode. Players work through tournaments and courses, building up their dream machine until they're ready to we against another player. Each player's sayed car is then used in a winner-takes-all face-off; the loser's car is nermanently removed from their memory card. If that isn't enough to entice

he Need for Speed series has

always been popular - even when the game itself wasn't all that

great, it always had enough cars to satisfy the most hardcore gearhead. Last year's Hot Pursuit added great gameniay to the mix, and white the gains made by High Stakes aren't as dramatic as the leap from NFS2 to

you, the always-enjoyable hot pursuit mode comes in two flavors: you against the police, or you as the police. Either way, hot pursuit remains the burning ember of this series, and whether you play as the cop or as the pursued, it's always fun. Other new modes (the



es, it pays to slow down near a roadblock. Really



to ram you into the rall

tournament and special events modes) create a financial system for earning and repairing cars, and the random generator feature, which enables completely different

scenarios each time, also adds a nice touch Technologically, High Stakes looks almost identical to last year's near tour-de-force. The specular highlighting on cars' curves and the window transparencies are just like Beyond the cosmetic, this actually

last year's version, but this year cars can take visible damage. affects gameplay, as lights go out, windshields are shattered, chassis are scratched, and the car doesn't drive as well. Unfortunately, the problems from last year remain as well: the less-than-impressive framerates and load times haven't noticeably improved. As always with this series, the

number and selection of cars is an auto nut's ultimate fantasy. The Ineup includes: BMW M5, BMW Z3, Ferrari 550 Maranello, Ferrari F50, Lamborghini, Diablo SV, Chevrolet Corvette CS, Pontiac Firebird Trans Am. Chevrolet Camaro Z28. Mercedes CLK GTR, Mercedes SLK

230, McLaren F1 GTR, Jaguar XKR. Aston Martin D87, and the Chevrolet Caprice, Not only can you play them all, but they each race and handle differently. As a nice trump card, High Stakes is the only driving game out this year with the

Porsche license - and the Porsches drive brilliantly. High Stakes has taken the impressive gains of Hot Pursuit and

added more than enough new features and modes to attract senes fans and newcomers alike. If you like fast cars - or just running from the cops - you'll love this game.

RATING ****



It's no SF Rush, but you do get vertical on occasion

Continuing its tradition of excellent fantasy games,

New World Computing offers another addictive entry in the Heroes of Might and Magic series



HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III

Developer: New World



Set on the continent of Erathia the game takes place after the king has died. You play the forces of good, evil, or "neutral" all looking to seize the crown and, as in StarCraft. you'll have to play as all three to see all the story elements in the game. Gamentay in Heroes of Might



and Magic IV is very similar to its predecessors. The same places you in control of heroes gallivanting around a beautifully illustrated 2D countryside. Littered about the lands are monsters, magic items and special exploration spots (like nuins temples and a wizard's tower). The goal of the game is to build up your hernes, amass armies under their command, and beat the tar out of the other guy in chess-like battles that occur on single-screen battlefields. Winning lets you take control of towns and





The battles are more epic and the magic mightler in this worthy se

game, it's really a game about fantasy Tapping into the root pleasures of fantasy RPGs, dungeon crawls, and action games, HoMM IV gives the sense that you are a part of a internally consistent world entirely unlike our own, it allows you to build up heroes until they are epic lords of titanic armies, rolling across the countryside, masters of all they survey

For fans of the previous installments in the series tooth of which were also excellent), there are some terrific additions this time out. Heroes may parrison towns: there are multiple new special exploration areas: there is an entire

"subterranean world" to explore in many of the scenarios; and there are many new character types. In the past, each town had only one character type that was native to it. In HOMM At there are two new town typits, and every town has two characters native to it

The story is also larger, with multiple threads working together to tell Erathia's war of succession. You play every combatant in the war, and it works as well here, as it did in StarCraft. On top of that, there are a fistful of one-off scenarios, many of which are excellent.

Added to all that, the game also has internet multiplay. While we did the review equivalent of poke at this feature with stirks __ MAMM is a fantastic single-player experience and we have no interest in playing it any other way - we did test it long

enough to say it works. While realtime strategy withers

on the vine, with many recent releases lackluster at best. HoMM reminds us that turn-based play is alive and well in fact, it's hard to remember why people said turnbased was dead in the first place.



cape that is the pri

space of HoMM III



Living proof that turn-based strategy games still have a place in the gaming landscape, HoMM III is a must-have for strategy fanatics



GEX 3: DEEP COVER GECKO

Publisher: Eidos Interactive Developer: Crystal Dynamics

meleased for 3DO way back hen the first Gex game was when, it was a fun platform adventure. When Grax 2 hit PlayStation, it was proof the system could do a good free-roaming 3D game Now Firlos Interactive has acquired Crystal Dynamics, and it appears that Gex 3 suffers from Yomh Pairler sundrome passing breasts and old technology off as a new and exciting game.

Apparently believing the Gex series needed a little more T&A Crystal added model Madiece Andrada as Apont Yitra /Goy's niri nomesis Rez has kirlnanned Wra and it is up to Gay to rescue his damsel in distress. Xtra serves little purpose in game aside from a few cinema scenes. She's just there to serve as window dressing and, presumably, to look good in ads.

Gex 3 Isn't anything exciting simply because it has all been done before. The same looks and plays much like Gex 2. The levels are mildly amusing, and Gex's quips are good but nowhere near the quality of his last outing. If you've played Gex 2, or just about any 3D adventure, you know what to expect here.

Level design has suffered a bit since Gex 2, with precision jumps being used to increase the difficulty on later levels. There is nothing more annoying than nearly finishing a level





Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko Isn't aven as good as its last outing

only to die and be forced to restart. In the end, Gex 3 is a passable game - barely Everything about the title is cookie cutter from beginning to end. Tomb Raider N. at least, had good level designs to back up its aging engine. Gex 3 doesn't even have that Suffice it to say we expected more from this one. Hopefully the next Gex game will be a little more original.

RATING ***

LEGEND OF LEGAIA

Publisher:

Developer: Control ith the RPG genre finally gaining

some real steam on PlayStation - no fewer than 10 titles are slated for release this year - SCEA's port of the Japanese Legend of Legala has drawn some serious attention from enthusiasts. Drawing its strength from an innovative combat engine, Legend of Legara follows the adventures of three unwitting warriors who must, in a stunning new RPG plotline, go on a quest to save the world.

Any worthwhile RPG consists of three fundamental parts: a good combat engine, an involving storyline, and memorable characters. Legand of Lessas strikes out into bold new terntory in the first category with a fighting system that mimics fighting



games more closely than RPGs. Instead of the usual attack/item/magic menu found in most RPGs, Leasie utilizes a directional menu that allows the player to manually enter in different attacks. Attacks can be strong together to create killer combos that add strategy as well as a high level of interaction to an otherwise tections task in most role-playing titles. But despite an inventive comba-

engine, Legala's storyline does nothing to move console role-playing games. away from the typical "party of hopeful idealists with colorful hair who battle self-doubt and bizarra monsters to save their medieval esque world (which usually consists of four continents and a floating city) from evil (in the guise of either (a) an androgynous long-haired god/goddess; or (b) three progressively tough forms of a massive, spellwielding behemoth, or (c) a free-form floating entity that has the power to cast spells called Apocatypse but can't seem to destroy the world in the time

it takes to finish the game)." (For the dueless: we were being sarcastic before when we said the plot was original.) Still, if you can deal with the trite hackneved story the new lighting engine makes this worth checking out.

RATING ★★★☆☆

STREET SKRTER Pletform: PlayStation

Publisher: Electronic Arts Developer: Micro Cabin

o-called "extreme" sports seem to be all the rage these days with snowboarding, mountain biking and the like filling up more games than you can shake a Mountain Dew can at. And now there's Street Sk8ter, the first all-skateboarding console game since Skate or Die on Ator 7800 Sk8ter delivers just about

what one would expect from a skateboarding game. Like Sega's Top Skater coin-op, the emphasis here is not on speed as much as it is on performing tricks - tracks can only be beaten by reaching a certain trick score. Simply racing to the goal line will not result in a win. There are checkpoints and a countdown timer to keep players from hanging around one particular area of the track, but lack of time is never a problem. The tricks in Street Sk8ter should

be familiar to skating fans Stirling the board along a rail and executing a handplant at the rim of a half-nine are just a few of the moves that come into play. Each trick is rated according to difficulty and given an appropriate score. Execute a trick properly and you will be awarded points - mess up and you will be penalized.

Although the gameplay is fair. Street Sk8ter suffers from terrible graphics. The game is rife with pop-up and clipping, Basic graphical errors like this are inexcusable; the game feels rushed, and it's just not fun for long to play an ugly game. Street Skitter also fails to sunnort the analog pad. Maneuvering along the track

would have been much more natural had analog control been in place. In the end. Street Skater is mildly diverting, but it just isn't polished enough to be a standout title. Skateboarding fans will just have to keep playing 720" until a triple-A

skating title hits the market



me. In fact, It's pretty

UM JAMMER LAMMY

Publisher: Developer: SCEI

SCEL



aRappe the Rapper was like a breath of fresh air in a time when developers had been content to pollute the PlayStation world with "me-too" games. The idea of a sequel had fans excited but concerned that more of the same would defeat the novelty of the onginal.

The developers obviously shared the same concerns, because Um Jammer Lammy is an entirely new experience, yet still maintains the same quirky outlook on life that made the original so endearing. The main difference is actually not so much in the gameplay, but in style and approach. This time around you play a lamb named Lammy who niavs a guitar rather than sings. The core of the sameplay - pressing the appropriate gamepad keys in time to the music - is unchanged, but the result is suitar riffs instead of rapping.

and it alters the whole feel of the game. In fact, the switch to guitar is a definite improvement - when improvising to score extra points it actually sounds like a gurtar solo (ri not always a good one) instead of a bunch of alberish. However, if you beat the same with Lammy, you're then given the option of playing the game as PaRappa, so those who miss the old style really don't have to miss anything after all. Even better, the

game now includes a two-player

mode, dueling with two suitars

flammy squares off against a blackclad metal chick, Rammy) or even PaRappa vs. Lammy Whore the game falls over so slightly short is in the story. While the characters are still 2D over 3D backgrounds and just as odd as ever, the plot of Lammy being late for a

concert isn't as compelling as PaRappa's quest to better himself so he could date Sunny Funny, and not guite as charming. On the other hand, the gameolov is still toos (maybe even better), the songs are still catchy (and hilanous), and there are tons of extra goodies packed in, making this a worthy successor in every sense of the term.

Besides, any game that includes a stage doe deserves five stars out of band

BATING ****

HYBRID HEAVEN

Developer: KCEO

intendo 64 is one of the few consoles in the history of videogaming that manages to be successful despite lacking games in key genres. Shortages are particularly noticeable in the RPG department. where you could previously only point to THO's less-than-spectacular Quest 64 as the only turn-based RPG out there. Thankfully, Konami's Osakabased KCED team is trang to fill the void with a full-fledged sci-fi RPG.

While it's nowhere near the quality of the many Japanese triles that have appeared on PlayStation over the past years, Konami's first RPG outing on N64 is a successful one. Hybrid Heaven a mixture of action fighting and roleplaying, uses a convoluted plot about aliens cloning and replacing humans to kick off some fairly original gameplay. Set in the year 2000, players take control of a member of a



be nice if they could do be

mysterious organization and literally descend into the underground to get to the bottom of a government coverun Gamenias mostly consists of Tomb Raider-style exploration of the game's 11 futuristic subterranean halls and tunnels, complete with jumping. crawling and some mildly engaging action sequences

However, as soon as the oneman narty humps into a hostile creature, Hybrid Heavers's RPG hentare shows its face. Although players can move around dynamically between attacks, battles are strictly menu driven: get close; select from kick, punch, and special-move attacks, and wait for the results While the ensuing battle animations are smooth and well-animated, they lack the visual punch of fantasy-based RPGs and get old very quickly after you've seen the main character do a "piledriver" on a mummy-like creature for the fifth time. you will probably try to avoid battles simply because they're so boring. It also doesn't bein that the game's ritially impressive environments eventually all look the same

Had Konami thrown in some variety, such as a city scene, the game could have been so much more than just an interesting hybrid with great graphics and sound. As it is, it's certainly fun, but not quite excellent

SMASH BROTHERS

Publisher: Nintendo of America

they are a-changing

ne thing's for sure: Nintendo has guts. Five years ago, the company wouldn't even dare attempt this - a fighting same featuring all of its popular NES, Super NES, and N64 characters? Sacrilege! But the times.

Rather than pitting the characters against each other in a traditional formula. Nintendo instead created a new style with a unique point system. The idea is to writtle the opponents' energy down to where a single attack will send the player flying offscreen.

Accidentally falling off the playing field will deduct a point from your overall. score, but setting knocked off by another character will increase their score by a point as well.

This is one of the first successful attempts at bringing four players into Bros, one of the most entertaining it's certainly weint to have Memort's atmosphere is definitely one of the game's charms. Everything from the

a side-scrolling fighter, making Smash party games ever released. And while Samus smack around Kirby, the surreal characters (Mann. Donkey Kone Pikachu, and Fox McCloud, to name only a few), to the individual powerups (such as a Super Star from Mario)

to the stage designs (Castle Hyrule, arryone?) have been annurately lifted from Nintendo-published games, There is even a hitarious, hidden revisit to the original 8-bit Super Mario Bros. Desnite the violent behavior

Nintendo has covered itself to ensure that its properties haven't some to the dark side. The minute-long intro shows that these characters aren't nined out of their respective games - no they're actually beanbags brought to life by a child's imagination. And after the fight, the losers politely applaud the victor a visual disclaimer inflicating the brawl was all in good fun. Fighting games have definitely

not been NG4's forte but Smech Bros



ture for Ni It's a great gam

changes that forever White not a traditional fighter, it is a fighting game, and the best one by far on N64.

RATING ****

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR

Publisher: Fox Interestive Developer: Fox Interestive

ver three years in the making. and with the backing and pressure of one of Hollywood's biggest action licenses, a lot was expected from Aliens versus Predator (AvP), Fortunately, Fox has managed to pull it all together in a product destined to have a similar impact in shaping game design as Half-Life.

That's not to say that AvP is in Half-Life's consummate class. It lacks much of Valve's masterful style and shape, but in their place is a level of tension that surpasses even that created by the daddy of them all. Doorn. With the option to play as either the Colonial Manne, the Alien, or the Predator, AvP's single-player levels are only of average design, but have a pacing normally reserved for the moves that snawned them

Six different levels for each creature constitute a variety of familiar settings - space station, alien hive, and outdoor environments - that highlight the flexibility of an engine sporting many visual similarities to Quake it. What's different is the use of dynamic lighting and sound effects. Lights can be blown out - which is fine for the Predator, with its separate alien- and human-targeting sensors, or for the Alien, which has a view enabling it to navigate in the dark - but it's territying for the poor Marine.

Finite ammunition for the Marine and the Predator (the Alien uses its claws and tail attacks): makes every burst critical. No mid level save option adds to the tension hut also makes successfully navigating the levels unnecessarily frustrating. Every move has to be carefully calculated, and here AvP treads that fine line between having a danger-filed atmosphere and simply being fun to play

Varied multiplayer modes re-create many epic scenes from the movies and comic books, and although the game lacks Ovake It's name visceral action quotient it makes up for it with immersive sameplay design. Played as the Marine, late at night with the lights out and the movie-inspired music cranked up 4vP is a totally absorbing, even terrifying,



ever released for PC experience. It's a shame that the

engine didn't have the eraphical clout of, say, an Unreal, or some more inventive level design, but it's fine for creating atmosphere, a commodity it onzes at every sten. making it one of the most memorable gaming experiences you're likely to survive.

RATING ***

REDLINE

Pletform: PC Developer: Beyond Gemes

n paper, Redline sounds good: a mission-based car-combat game in which the player can exit the car and fight on foot. But whatever

points Redline gets for its high concept, it loses in flawed execution. To begin with, the game's 30 engine just isn't that great. Sure, there are all the requisite flashy special effects, but otherwise, it just looks

bland, even when using 3D acceleration. Worse, the image onscreen occasionally use freezes while the engine continues humming undemeath - the net effect is that nothing moves for a second or so, and when it starts up again, you find yourself instantly slamming into the

wall on the other side of the arena. Admittedly the car combat is fast paged, and the enemy vehicles are nothing if not tenacious, but the constant need for hand braking and 180° power slides (the game's single "hook") gets old fast. The first-person action is just plain had — the control Bri't any better than Doom, enemy Al seems to mostly consist of standing in place and shooting in your general direction, and the weapon selection is pure "seen it all before."

Add in other, smaller deficiencies No room character primation with dialogue, and the occasional moment when you're left with no idea what to do next, and you've got a title that's a misfire all around. Combining two different types of gameplay into one game is a terrific idea, but someone should have mentioned that welding a mediocre first-person shooter onto a mediocre car-combat game is not the way to make the whole better than the sum of its parts.

RATING ★★☆☆☆



REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL

Platform: PC Men Publisher: 3DD Developer: Cyclone Studios

irst off, Requiem has a great story With a plot pulled straight out of Milton's Paradise Lost, the player assumes the role of Malachi, one of the faithful angels, who is sent to Earth to stop the fallen angels from bringing about the Apocatypse.



ology, but a grey and a few clever to

Like Half-Life (to which inevitable comparisons will be made). Requiem blends its storyline into a first-person shooter and is, in some ways, even more successful at it than Value's trendsetter. Certainly, its nightmare vision of pursatory in the same's first. level grabs your attention right away. Still, it's not without its

annoyances, either. The graphics engine, while serviceable, is barely state of the art, coming up a bit bland when set next to Half-Life, much less Unreal: Tournament. This "sold hair above average" leaks into the game's control (it's too easy to get hung up on corners) and weapon design (pretty much seen 'em all before).

Likewise, while the enemy designs are imaginative, the Al isn't that smart. Most of the bosses can be defeated by relatively simple

patterns, but can withstand so much damage that they still take forever to kill. While some levels are strewn with NPCs, very few are interactive.

But if some aspects of the game are simply "good enough," other things largely make up for them. The aforementioned story, for example, is even life by better-than-usual voice actors. Also, Malachi slowly gains a large number of divine powers, which enable him to do n'ifty things like throw lightning, turn enemies into pillars of salt, and resurrect dead foes to fight on his side (it's a thrill to charge into a room with your undead army right behind you, then quickly exit and watch them all fight it out). in the final analysis. Recurem is

no technical marvel, but its uniqueness is divine

THE GAMER'S GUIDE

The guintessential guide to released software

Welcome to the Gamer's Guide, the ultimate resource for checking what games to buy. Every month we add the reviews from last issue and push out an equal number of older ones. Which ones, you ask? Generally we leave the console titles in, even for games that are out. of print, since there's a large used market. So PC games get dumped first, especially old, mally had PC titles (which, paradoxically, makes PC games look really, really good if you just check the ratings). Once again, please note the issue number - technology and game design march on relentlessly, so a game that got **** in NG 6 might be hard-pressed to score *** today.

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SLAVE ZERO

INTERVIEWED: MIST' PUNISHS, PRINCIPES

SYSTEM: PC PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: ACCOLAGE

Next Generation For someone playing Slave Zuro for the first time, do you have any general tios or hints on how best to become an expert at tatt Powers: In general, I would recommend becoming very good at straling and aiming. In many ways, the skill set to be good at Slave Zero is the same skill set as other action shooters (primarily first-person). Our goal was to make a third-person action game that uses the same controls and method of play as your favorite first-person game. Overall, the ability to

maneuver and fire at the same time is vital Practice makes perfect. Oh, and save often.

NG: What mission or specific area of the game do you find the most difficult? What's your personal strategy for getting past it? MP At first pass through the game, the bosses are the most difficult. Each boss (there are five total) has unique weapons and requires different strategies to defeat. But once you have astered a boss, it will be easy every time after that. The strategy for the bosses is to: 1) remember to save your game and 2) keep playing it until you learn the pattern and the best moments to fire or dodge.

NG: Which team member is best at the game? MP. The designers are really good. They know where the enemies are going to come from, where the ammo is placed, and where all the secret areas are. After the designers come the testers - they play the game so much they are definitely experts.

NG: How does your render engine, the Ecstasy Engine, affect the gameplay in Slave Zero? Does it improve or limit the amount of objectives the player has in each "mission" or level? P. The Ecstasy Engine has allowed us to make a beautiful, interactive, action game. The gameplay (and artistic style) we designed for ve Zero was based around the capabilities of the Ecstasy Engine. My feeling is that the Ecstasy Engine has allowed us to make a unique, exciting game that couldn't be made using any other existing engines.

NG Do you recommend any specific peripherals or controllers that might make playing through

Slave Zero a more "enhanced" experience? MP: Personally, I am a big fan of the keyboard/mouse combination. I know people who enjoy a joystick and some who live and die by the SpaceOrb. Whatever your peripheral of choice is. Stave Zero supports it.

NG: What's your proudest achievement in Slave Zero? (i.e. quickest playthrough, low casualties, satisfying kill, etc.)

MP: In regards to my gameplay achievements (versus the development of the game), I guess I am most proud of my Plasma Rail aiming ability. The Plasma Rail is an instant-hit weapon that does lots of damage. Usually I can take out either a ground enemy or flying enemy without missing. This is extremely important when you are getting attacked from all sides by four to six different enemies

NG. What weapons in the game are favored by the team? Why?

P. There are different camps within the team. Many people favor the guided rockets. Then there are those who lean towards the more classic, rough-'n'-ready Cyclone (machine gun). The Plasma Rail is a great weapon but requires much more skill/aim.

NG: Are there any cheats, tricks, codes, or game elements in Slave Zero that were added for personal reasons (inside jokes, etc.)? If so, what are they, and how do they relate to the team? MP: One of the areas we were really able to add some personal touches is the signage in the









person action game that uses th ne controls and method of play



city. Many of the neon signs are related to people, phrases, or lokes within the project, in addition to neon signs, the attentive game player will find textures hidden in the game with inside messages from the team.

NG As a member of the development team. how important do you feel codes or cheats are in games? Do they usually enhance the gameptay expenence by adding replay value, or do they draw attention away from the actual game?

MP Codes/cheats are important. They can assist the player in seeing all the features of the game. Of course, they also can be used to ruin the solo game experience. My suggestion is that someone play through the game without cheats first, then as a second or third pass, try out the cheats.

NG Multiplayer or single player? Which mode requires the most strategy and which mode do you prefer to play irr?

MP Both single player and multiplayer require different strategies. In many ways, they are two separate games. We tune the weapons slightly differently. Then the team-play multiplayer options are even more different than the solo game (in regards to strategy). I really enjoy them both. The solo game is absolutely great,







We spent a lot of time devel a story that is both engaging and exciting," says Powers









but after playing through it dozens of times. I must admit I favor multiplaver

NG What was the original, ideal concept for the game? How closely does the end product MP. The original concept went something like this: "Giant robot combat in a bustling future metropolis. Sense of scale is vital, as is lots of

interactivity with the environment. Action gameolay, not simulation, twitch garning," I believe we match this description exactly NG What games influenced the design of Slave Zero? What games are you currently playing? MP We were influenced by a lot of different

the Evangelion anime series the most that both is engaging and exciting but doesn't interfere with the action. NG: What ideas for the game ended up on the cutting-room floor? MP Slave Zero generated tons of ideas, Both

it. We wanted to create our own art style,

mixing anime with the style of hard-edged

European graphic novels. We probably examined

We spent a lot of time developing a story

from within the team and from outside the company. The stant-robot action same concept really seems to hit home with lots of people. And a wide variety of people. Some ideas we just couldn't include in this version

"The attentive game player will find textures hidden in the game with inside messages from the team"

future projects.

games The team loves Quake II and Half-Life. We looked at a number of PlayStation games for action inspiration like One and Einhander. The games I play currently are Half-Life and Quake II.

NG What is your favorite moment in the game? MP I have many favorite moments. I really like our FMA (full motion animation) system. The seamless cuts from gameplay to cinematic is cool (the FMAs are all done in-engine).

And the sense of being a giant robot running around creating havoc - I truly feel as though I am in an actual city - the mood and mosphere is awesome. Also, several of the enemy engagements are fast paced, and my hands are sweating, and the city is in ruins when it is all done

NG: Seeing that the game is based around Japanese anime mecha, which anime series did you draw the most influence from? In regards to the story, what were your inspirations? MP We looked at a lot of different Japanese anime to get ideas for Slave Zero. Slave Zero is inspired by Japanese anime but not based upon

include: scaling buildings, flying, transforming the Slave. Look for many of these ideas in

NG: What was the toughest obstacle for the development team in creating the game? MP. Overall, the toughest part of making Slave Zero was creating the sense of scale and the interactive environment. Slave Zero is almost two games in one. One huge part of the game is the living city and the feeling that you are a giant robot in a bustling metropolis. The other part, and what is even more important, is the action gameplay - giving the player tons of weapons and letting them attle it out with other giant robots. Balancing these two aspects was challenging

NG: What other games/titles have you worked on in the past? MP Members of the team have worked on a

variety of titles. Some of the games our team members have under their belts include: MechWarrior 2. Interstate '76. Deadlock, Duke Nukern: Time To Kill, and Test Drive 4.

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System Shock

n 1985, the game console was dead, Had Nintendo chosen not to pursue the U.S. market, the console industry might have gone the way of the dinosaur, but the company believed there was still a market in the U.S. (2.5 million Famicoms sold in Japan instilled some confidence!

Nintendo didn't expect to actually produce and distribute its system. It looked to Atari in hopes that the former juggemant had enough steam left to bring the platform to the U.S., but Atari turned Nintendo down, (After NES hit big. Atan chose to move ahead with its mothballed 7800 hardware) With retailers less than enthusiastic about

consites - they had shelves of discount hardware and software gathering dust -Nintendo struck out on

its own, packaging NES with a gimmicky toy called R.O.B. the Robot, The trick worked. With NES

labeled as a toy the channel opened up. However, NES couldn't do it alone, it needed a killer app to lure consumers away from their home computers. With the help of Shigeru Miyamoto, NES led

along with Super Mario Bros., soon reached critical mass.

the charge with one of the most successful games to date, Super Mano Bros. The system retailed at \$159 in a package that included R.O.B., a light gun, and two games, Duck Hunt and Gyrornite. Roughly 20 games were available at launch, but none took advantage of the system's unprecedented 56-color display as thoroughly as Shizeru Mivamoto's creations, and NES.







colorful tile-based de puzzler in Amiga



Retroview by Steme Kest, easter of a furthcoming back on the history of videogames

NHAT EVER IAPPENED TO?

asbly the most reprehensible arcade game ever, the mind boggles about what could have happened had Eddy's 1988 anti-masterpiece the attention of the sa, as its earlier Deat Race did. You had a light gun anyone. The fact that you could fact that the main point of this game was to shoot defenselss humans in the most gory



in the United States In 1987, The Lexend of Zelda for NES not only helped Shigeru Miyamoto begin to establish his reputation as the greatest game designer of his time, it also forced Nintendo of America to establish a new convention that would one day become a company hallmark

reated in 1986 and released

Prior to Zelda, Mivamoto's work was more twitch than thought, After Donkey Kong, Nintendo brass knew he had good ideas, and Super Mario Brothers showed that his fantasy worlds could be big, but it wasn't until Zeida that he showed his skill at developing stories and puzzles. Unfortunately, when Zelda was created, no one knew how consumers (especially U.S. consumers) would react to a sprawling NES game in which players roamed through worlds filled with dungeons and monsters. Although games like Wizardry were popular on PC, there was simply

no analogue on consoles.

When the first prototypes of The Legend of Zeida arrived in the United States, Nintendo president Minoru Arakawa was not at all confident about the complex game filled with text windows. Worried that perhaps the game was too complicated for American audiences, he decided to test the game on his employees. Since the prototypes had all Japanese text, Arakawa arranged for Japanese-speaking workers to sit with American employees and translate any Kanii

It was at in Japanese, which made it really hard to play, but it was just so compelling that we kept playing it and playing it. The way the game mechanics worked, the fact that it did this great thing with that sword. Typical of Mivemoto, it had puzzles, You would come across things that

would be on the island or behind a

that appeared in the text boxes.

door or whatever, and you could see them, but you couldn't have them.

> **Howard Phillips** Former game moster and spokesperson Nintendo of America

As he tested The Legend of Zelda on his employees, Arakawa noticed that most of the American workers did not warm up to the game instantly. Although everyone ended up giving the game high marks, some people needed as many as 10 hours before they understood the game and enjoyed it.

The Legend of Zelda was a different kind of game, and also, it took a long time until people really liked the game. I hoped people would be patient enough and understand that it was a different game and enjoy it. I was worried at the time

Minoru Arakawa

Zelda

ith the introduction of The Legend of Zelda for NES, Nintendo introduced millions of gamers to the underworld of the RPG. Unlike Ultima and other games before it. Zeids relied on reflexes instead of the turn-based strategy interface Also, bright colorful graphics - a Nintendo staple - replaced the dark fantasy earthtones usually associated with RPGs.

The gaming world (which was one enormous space rather than disparate levels) enabled a newly immersive and cohesive gaming experience — finding items and secrets actually increased the play area, it was also one of the first battery-backed-up games, enabling players to save their games (and its creator to make a much longer, more epic title).

Combined with the exuberance and creativity of its director, Shigeru Miyamoto, it can be said that Zeida has done more for the RPG genre than any other game, paying the way for Square Soft's Final Fantasy games and the incredibly successful DragonQuest series. The best example of its impact on garners can be seen in the overwhelming success of The Legend of Zeida. The Ocarina of Time for N64.







to play games for a living,"

although a better description

Although the look of the game is now antiquated, the scope of the adventure and the solid gameplay foundation cannot be denied

When it was finally released. the American version of The Legend of Zeids was housed in a shiny gold cartridge that included an internal 10-year battery that enabled it to store three players' progress so that they would not have to start again after every game. The Legend of Zeida was the first NES game to include the

It also came with more documentation than earlier games a thick instruction booklet that identified most of the monsters and weapons in the game, and a large fold-out map of the fantasy land of Hyrule. As a final precaution, Arakawa took the bold step of adding a toll-free telephone number that players could call if they needed help with the game.

The game was so different that we were afraid that people couldn't figure out how to play and would give up, so we put the 800

telephone number in the game (booklet). They could call us for free and we could answer any questions about the games. We released The Lexend of

Zelda on June 27, 1987. All of a sudden, the telephone started ringing. We hired four people to answer the questions over the telephone, and those four people were busy all the time, so we increased from four to five, 10, 20, 40, 50, and we ended up with 200. Minoru Arakawa

Customers called non-stop and asked questions about more than The Legend of Zeids - they wanted to know about every game. To cover the calls, Arakawa expanded his telephone bank to 10 full-time operators, but it wasn't enough. He continued expanding the telephone operation, running ads in the Help Wanted sections of the Seattle Times and the Seattle Post-

Intelligencer for people who "want

might have been follow games while answering questions for a lving," By 1990, there were more than 200 people working on the help lines, and the toll-free number became too expensive to maintain. Expecting to reduce the number of calls, Arakawa approved a suggestion to keep the help center as a free service but eliminate the toil-free number. Throughout the '90s, the Call Center continued to maintain a staff of 200 operators fielding an average of 100,000 telephone calls, 3,500 email messages, and 1,900 letters per week, During the holidays, the staffing grows to 500 operators fielding as many as 250,000 calls, Call Center staffers have also served an important PR function, generating countless stones for Nintendo in the local and national press on those lucky employees who "play games for a

living."



Letters

was reading your review of Street Fighter Zero 3 in NG 52 and was very excited, being a longtime SFV fan. But about halfway through the article it struck me that you had a less favorable review of a previous SEV game for PlayStation. I dug into my old pile of NGs and found that in NG 45 you remarked during a X-Men vs. SF review that "Capcom has always had problems converting its memory-hungry, sprite-based fighting fests to PlayStation due to the low system RAM, and X-Men vs. Street Fighter should convince the company that it's time to stop How about we chalk X-Men vs. SF up to a learning experience that paid off very well in the end

Keri Cerpenter ken@ucl.edu

Fair enough, it's tempting to say something like, "They've had three years - it's about time," but we like

noticed a small error in your review of Baldur's Gate. On page 85 of your April issue, you stated that "multiplayer mode (is) an innovation that is entirely new

was a small game called Towers I by JV Games - released on the Atari 1040ST and 386 and 486 PCs (Pentiums were still a twinkle in Intel's eve) -- that had a multiplayer feature, If I'm not mistaken, Towers / was the first multiplayer RPG to be created. Utilizing a 14.4 modern. you could call up a friend and play together in reattime. As a matter of fact, using the insane power of a senal cable, you were even able to play cross-platform between Atari and PC. A modern patch for the PC. was being developed, but due to horrible PC sales it was dropped. I believe cross-platforming an RPG small garage development team and easily overlooked (sniff sniff), but 7bwers / was a commercial release and deserves a tad bit of credit. As far as Baldur's Gate is now and one of the best tive ever played. I wish all of them the success they deserve and highly recommend it. Their design has

for RPGs." Way back in 1994, there





Capcom has learned a lot about bringing its 2D fighters to PlayStation

and the excellent Street Fighter Zero 3 is proof



ems we named the wrong guy when we mentioned the animation director for massively oversuccessful anime Mononoke Hime

holding onto the glories of the past with the death grip of a pissed-off warlord

Jea Jeeger JV Games Jeg@ivgames.com

take your word for it, though, since we can't seem to track down a copy. of the original Towers. One question springs to mind - Towers It Plight of the Stangazer seems to have

have written to you about eight times with many different questions about my N64 system. How come you haven't printed even one of my letters in your magazine? How many letters do you get anyway (it can't be all that many, can it? As a dedicated reader of your magazine for five years, I would hope that you give all of your readers a fair shot of getting their questions posted in your magazine.

Chris Norton Berkley, MA

Actually, Next Generation receives a staggering number of letters every day, counting email, and that's just

from readers, Just so you know, we generally cut out the Hegible, the unintelligible, the stark declarations that "SonY RuLeZIIII" and the odd (whatever game)"-type question we'd like to say there's a rhyme or reason behind which few set. response. We more or less try to pick the ones that seem. readers want to know or care to point out. Or that simply catch our

Now, sit back down and

am usually not picky about errors, but being an anime fan myself, I couldn't let the one in NG 52 pass, in your Alpha look at Jade Cocoon, the credit for the animation direction of the film Mononoke Hime was given to Katsuva Kondo Instead of Masashi Ando. Kondo was only on the staff as an animator

It is true, however, that Kondo is a talented artist. He was the animation director for the film KWs Delivery Service (recently released in the U.S. by Disney/Buena Vistali.

He also did the animation direction and character designs for several other movies completed by Studio Ghibli, the creators of Mononoke Hime (which, by the way, is not only the highest-grossing animated film in Japan, but also the secondhighest-grossing film of any kind, beating the likes of E.T. and losing only to the unsinkable Titanic). Please correct me if I am wrong

> John David Garza gerzellkeyfreme.cjes.crg

Thank you for pointing this out. The editor who failed to fact check was going to be ripped apart by wild dogs, but in view of our new policy of non-violence, he was instead given a stern talking-to and a fifteen-minute Time Out. We're sure he feets really bad.

am shocked and apparled at

the low you guys stooped to in order to sell your goddamn magazine! On the cover of your April Issue (NG 52), you had in clear sight "Half Life 2 - EXCLUSIVE info revealed!" But when I looked inside. I couldn't find a preview of the game or even a news article about it. The only things I found that were close were the article on Team Fortress 2 and an interview with Valve's Gabe Newell. The only "exclusive into" I could find in either of these articles was Mr. Newell's response to a question: "Obviously we haven't announced Half-Life 2 or said anything about it yet." "Exclusive info," indeed! You flagrantly gave the impression that you had information on a game that wasn't even announced yet! I hope that you cease this disagreeable practice of yours and try to be a more respectable and trustworthy magazine in the future. Michael Kluga

weirdo_MK9hotmail.com Well, Michael, at the risk of

sounding sarcastic, have you ever If you had kept reading, you would have seen that immediately after he said "we haven't announced Half-



Gabe Newell really did talk about Half-Life 2 in NG 52 - he just couldn't say explicitly that's what he was talking about

number of new features pertaining to "future Valve games." (in fact, during the interview he read the list off a legal pad) No, he didn't say "these are the feature additions we're making for Half-Life 2," but then again, he couldn't, since it's up to the publisher, Sierra, to officially announce the game's existence

it's all very "nudge nudge, wink wink," but we figured our readers would get it. Apparently, we were wrong

am kind of confused. The original GoldenEye came out for N64 and was, of course, one of the best games of all time, right? Now what confuses me is why did Nintendo give the rights to PlayStation for Yornorrow Never Dies? The main reason a lot of people I know bought an N64 was because of GoldenEye, so why did Nintendo sell out? I have heard rumors about Tomorrow Never Dies coming out for N64 also, but I haven't heard any confirmation. Maybe you could clear this up for me and also when is Perfect Dark

chuck@@sai.net

"Chuck"

Next Generation Letters, 150 North Hill Dr., Brisbane, CA 94005. Fax us: (415) 488-4888. Email us: ngonline@maginemedia.com

scheduled for release?

The reason is simply that Tomorrow "sell out" in the first place Nintendo and Rare acquired the rights only to GoldenEye, not the entire James Bond senes, and you can bet that when MGM saw the kind of money. a Bond game could make, they were less than willing to give up those rights for Tomorrow Never Dies And we're somy (although it's Interactive currently has no plans to

The good news is that Perfect Rare but even by the same team that created GoldenEve, is due out sometime late this fall, just in time for the holidays.



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The master designers of Namco's Soul Calibur break all the limits on Dreamcast

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